Bandginama

S. Raghbir Singh 'Bir'

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Contents

Part I

Foreward

The Bandgi Nama or “Communion with the Divine” by Sardar Raghbir Singh Bir contains the spiritual and devotional thoughts of the author, which were flashed to him in his midnight silent meditation. S. Raghbir Singh was not only a poet of a high order, but a thinker and a philosopher who had personally experienced various stages of spiritual discipline while leading a life of a successful householder-fulfi1ling all the obligations towards his parents, family and children imparting them the best education-academic and cultural.

Bandgi Nama originally written in Punjabi (Gurmukhi script) has been acclaimed as a veritable guide to self-realization even for a new aspirant. It has been translated into English for the benefit of English-knowing seekers, who have no approach to Punjabi. Along with the translation are published copious references from Guru Granth Sahib in Roman in support of the author’s own spiritual experiences to lend authenticity to them.

The author himself started as a layman on the spiritual path, and reached a stage through various sadhnas of spiritual discipline, from where he could reflect the vision of the Divine, for the rise of man of God - *manas te devte kie.*

Guru Nanak laid down the three principles-

(i) prayer *(ardas)*,

(ii) effort *(sharam)*, and

(iii) sharing spiritual experience with others, *ape jape avra naam japave.*

In conformity with these fundamentals, whereas the author explains the technique of prayer and effort, he shares his achievements in the spiritual field with others and has given vent to the thoughts and ideals which were revealed unto him in his communion with The “Divine.”

Normally the translations of such spiritual thoughts and ideas fail to express the spirit contained in the original, but it is very heartening to find that the translator has maintained the original beauty of expression and the flight of imagination.

The quotations from Guru Granth Sahib and other scripture made use of in the original and in translation of the Hindu and Muslim saints addressed to the mankind, are of common heritage for the uplift of human being to a better material and spiritual life. The learned author has ably described in the book in simple language as to how one could discipline himself to undertake the course of concentration and meditation (*Simran*) in various stages of development which he himself experienced and brought unto practice in day to day living along with the normal course of mundane duties. The starting point for spiritual evolution according to the author is *Simran* (Remembrance of God), *gyan* (Divine knowledge) and the effort that lead an aspirant to understand the real nature of the Divine. The *gurbani*, says the learned author, if properly understood and practised takes an aspirant to the Path of realization.

Lastly Birji quotes profusely from the holy Granth that all efforts and *sadhnas* without God's grace, remain short of complete fulfillment of the ultimate object of the human birth -

bai prapat manukh dehurea
Gobind milan ke eh teri baria

The publishers deserve a special gratitude of the readers for providing them with this aid to spiritual advancement and it is hoped that they would attend to other writings of Birji and retrieve them from oblivion. No doubt during his lifetime Birji was shy of publication, but now that he has left these treasures to us to draw benefit from them, it is our duty to acquaint people with his thoughts, efforts and experience.

HIRA LALL CHOPRA, M.A. D.Litt.
Calcutta,
Dated 10th February, 1981.

Part II

About the Author

S. Raghbir Singh Bir, Scion of the highly respected family of Lala Jawahar Mal Ahluwalia who was chief Engineer and in charge of the arsenal of maharaja Ranjit Singh, was born in Lahore on 7th October, 1896. He lost his mother when he was one and a half years old. At the age of four under the inspiration and guidance of his grandmother, Sardarni Bishan Kaur, who was a lady of great devotion, young Raghbir Singh began to practice "Simran." He continued this practice all through his academic career studying side-by-side Sikh History. He was married at the age of 14 to the eldest daughter of S. Sulakhan Singh of Gujranwala. She died after two years and he was married again to Sardarni Rawel Kaur, eldest daughter of S. Sundar Singh Jaspal of Kapurthala, who remained his life long companion right upto his demise. He graduated from the Khalsa College, Amritsar. During his college days he took active part in social and religious activities and wrote poetry. He grew up to be a poet of high order. His most inspiring masterpiece which he himself sang at the Sikh Educational Conference held in Lahore, was *'Bajan Walia tere school under asan sunia ke lagdi fees koi ba'*, became a house hold song in many Sikh homes. The British Government banned his first Book, *'Bir de Tir.'*

The Jallianwala Bagh tragedy had a great impact on his tender mind. He entered heart and soul in the Akali movement and had to go underground several times on account of his anti-British poems.

His father S. Lena Singh was a high official in the Indian Railways, but S. Raghbir Singh refused to join British Government service. He came to Calcutta in 1922 and started his business. In 1940 he started Atam Science, a monthly Magazine. He joined in partnership with S. Niranjan Singh Talib and ran Desh Darpan, a daily Pubjabi News paper in Calcutta. In 1940 he started Gurmat Parchar Society in Calcutta for the propagation of Gurbani and Kirtan, which is still going strong. It was in Calcutta that he conceived the idea of establishing a Sikh Convent and created the Atam Science Trust in 1953.

Thereafter he established a Sikh Public School at Dagshai in 1957. Later on he created another trust known as the Gurmat Parchar Trust for the propagation of the teachings of the Guru Granth Sahib, the Holy Book of the Sikhs. He breathed his last on the 14th April 1974 at Dagshai where he spent his last 17 years solely devoting himself to the service of God, *Simran* (meditation) and to his Writings. He is the author of several books in Punjabi.

Part III

Preface

Sardar Raghbir Singh Bir's Bandgi Nama, written in Panjabi, has provided spiritual solace and enlightenment for the Sikhs for many years. It has now been translated into English with a view to making it available to non-Punjabi speaking readers who are interested in religious issues. Although the book is an outstanding interpretation of Sikhism it is not at all sectarian in outlook, and the followers of other religions can profit by reading it and using it as a guide for progress in their spiritual journey.

Sikhism is one of the great world religions; the teachings of the gurus transcend the limits of caste and creed as also of time and place. The universal appeal of the Guru Granth Sahib is evident not only in the catholicity of Gurbani but also in the inclusion of hymns composed by Hindu and Muslim Bhaktas. By quoting extensively from the Holy Book and explaining the essence of its leading ideas in simple language the author has not only cleared the way for a new understanding of the Sikhs view of life but also established fresh link between the Sikhs and other religious communities.

Bandgi Nama is not an academic study of metaphysical problems. It is not a philosophical dissertation, although a person whose mind was not deeply rooted in philosophical knowledge and illuminated by philosophical insight could not have written it. As a frank and convincing record of the author's own spiritual experiences it is primarily a practical guide for earnest seekers of Truth. As a true Sikh he lived the life of a householder, performing his domestic duties on lines prescribed by the Gurus but declining to be diverted from the real purpose of life by domestic entanglements. At the initial stage of his quest of Truth he asked himself the question: 'Why must I try to realize Truth?' Like many others he defied and resisted the 'inner voice,' but meditation, *Simran* metamorphosed him and 'recreated him in spirit.' He did not share the common idea that one should not divulge his spiritual experiences. He says, 'Our spiritual stock does not shrink or dwindle by sharing it with others.'

Apparently, he thought - quite rightly, that some seekers of Truth might find his experiences helpful in their difficulties.

The author was prompted to write this book by his firm belief that a correct interpretation of religion could transform men into angels and this 'world into a paradise.' In particular, he aimed at diverting the mind of the young generation tending to be 'materialistic and atheistic' under the 'influence of Westernism' - to the right path by 'unfolding to them the great

spiritual treasures we have inherited from our forebearers.' The 'spiritual treasures' unfolded by him in this book are a heritage of the Sikhs in a special sense, but they form a part of India's common heritage and provide a stimulus for nation building on the basis of abiding values.

The central aim and aspiration of the Sikh, says the author, 'is to see God, to realize God, to be one with God.' In his effort to achieve this 'aim' the Sikh seeks guidance from the Sacred Book of which the two 'central, essential points are God and His realization through Naam.' The Word is the substance of the teachings of the Gurus, 'a vision of their souls, of their Spirit, of their life-experience.' By regulating life in the light of the Word one merges-at the final stage of his spiritual journey in 'the light of all light.' At that stage there is 'something indefinable, ineffable, a sense indescribable - of joy.' One basic point-essential to all spiritual efforts-is stressed by the author 'God cannot be realized through mere devotion, meditation, self-effort, cleverness, ritualism, or Tapas, or even merely through Simran, and God can be realized only through His own grace. Grace - the indefinable blessing', manifests itself when we purge ourselves of self or pride, and take to *Simran*, or adoration, with our whole heart.'

The author communicates to the reader with exemplary lucidity and through apt quotations and examples, the meaning of dedication of life to One who is *Sargun, Nirgun* and *Nirankar*. He has written a book that should be read again and again, not only by believers in Reality, but also those who are troubled by 'honest' doubts.

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Calcutta,
11 February, 1981.

Chapter 1

Introduction

‘Those who have realized the Truth
Are kings among men, indeed.
These earthly kings are no kings
To love anything except God causes pain
Why exalt and glorify what is created
It is but fleeting and evanescent
One alone lives for ever and ever
The God-centred being who realizes this Truth
He is like God, ever-living and deathless.’

Guru Amardas - Maru.

The Voice within me has ever exhorted me, ”Realize God, thereby you will find within you the Eternal Bliss.” For a long time, I did not heed the inner Voice. At times, I would answer this voice in the words of Bhagat Dhanna, While starving, I cannot afford that quest.

Again, out of an unfathomable ocean, as it were, there would emerge a voice from my innermost depths chiding me, “Realize God, there is no emancipation, no salvation without realization of God.”

Then I laid before this voice all my doubts “Why must I try to realize God? why must I exert and close my eyes? The world is so beautiful, with its charming rivers, majestic mountains, twinkling stars, lovely sky, beautiful buildings, good friends, and soft beds. How beautiful all these are!”

At this, the voice within grew faint and I was happy that I had silenced it for good. But, again, the voice was audible with four-fold intensity "Realize God; not in vain hast thy Guru said,

> "Naught save God's worship will avail thee"
>
> Guru Arjan - Asa.

> "This life of thine is being wasted,
> Thou hast fallen in love with the fleeting phenomena of the world."
>
> Guru Arjan - Asa.

> "Naught but God's worship will avail thee; The rest is naught."
>
> Guru Arjan - Gauri Sukhmani.

> "The world which fascinates and enthralls thee,
> looks so to thee on account of
> thine own angle of vision;
> He who is happy finds
> The whole world in radiant joy;
> To the diseased mind all are ailing."
>
> Guru Arjan - Sorath.

The voice further repeated:

"An object grows pretty, if you think it so. (There is nothing either good or bad but the thought that makes it so). You might think a certain river enchanting, but how does the mother view it-whose only son, with the newly wedded wife and the marriage party has been drowned in it? To her, that river, with its uncertain currents and blind wells, is a treacherous serpent. Rivers, when in spate, wash away hundreds of villages, destroying thousands of lives. You describe the hills and mountains as fascinating, but ask those whose dear ones were buried under debris in the Kangra earthquake. To them, these very hills and mountains are deathtraps! We find the stars radiant and lustrous, but ask someone suffering the pangs of separation the glimmering stars seem to mock them. The world is neither charming nor repelling, but as you view it-It is your individual angle of vision that makes all the difference."

The inner voice continued:

"When you search within yourself, all your doubts are resolved. You will see through the heart of things; death will lose its terror; the world and its joys and sorrows will vanish, your inner latent powers will awaken and then you will transcend the world's allurements."

We say,"While starving, one cannot worship God," but "None is satisfied, except when inwardly contented." "Put thy faith in me ; Bhakti will drive away thy want. Not bread but contentment will appease thy hunger. Contentment will quench thy yearning."

> Greed will not go Nam, oneness with God
> doth banish greed and sense of want.
>
> Guru Amardas - Maru Var.

> Meet thy Guru, And thou wilt find thy contentment.
>
> Guru Amardas - Gujri.

For a long time, I procrastinated in the face of the inner voice. Whenever I acted directly in opposition to the dictates of the voice from within, it became all the more insistent and persistent.

At last, I began serious research in religion. By birth, I am a Sikh, and so I instinctively believed that I must knock at Guru Nanak's door. Even though the sacred Granth is in the Gurmukhi script, yet it is not easy to understand it, and the Sikh ecclesiastical authorities have no provision for people in genuine spiritual stress. Those of us who have acquired Western culture, do not know where to turn for guidance. Sikhs of the old school who have no such links with Western mores cannot appreciate the difficulties of the former class.

Whenever I failed to understand a point in the sacred Book, I prayed for light and waited for it with faith and hope, and not in vain. In my meditations, I had flashes of light, and my long-standing doubts were resolved. Many a time, I lighted upon books and writings, which answered my questions so aptly that I was lured into believing that they had been written specially for me. In this manner, my uncertainties were clarified. What astonishes me is that the inner voice, which I had defied and resisted, continued to ring in my ears and has ever striven to set me on the right path. In consequence, now, I never ignore it and listen to it most intently.

This voice of the Soul keeps on prompting, goading, and urging each one of us, conveying its heavenly message. We understand and profit by it in proportion to, and in accordance with, our individual stage of spiritual enlightenment. Guided by this voice, I have read many religious books and have met enlightened souls to seek further knowledge. I had a thirst for testing the truth of spiritual doctrines.

In moments of spiritual conflict, Simran, or meditation, helps us to arrive at the Truth and the seeming contradictions vanish. I shall describe how I acted in such crises. I read religious books and consulted mahatmamas tested what they said, and noted the result. I have continued to do so, even though 1 have not yet attained perfection, and, at times, I am spiritually in a pitiable state. I am not at all incontinent, or given to pleasures of the flesh, and yet I cannot deny that I am impressed by feminine charm and sex appeal. This susceptibility has impeded my spiritual progress to a certain extent. Nevertheless, meditation, or Simran, has metamorphosed me and recreated me in spirit. In this new, regenerated life, there are no worries, no vexations, no cares, no sense of want, no craving for anything. There is joy, there is bliss, there is calm, peace and poise-a carefree life. The greatest material joys cannot compare with the inner bliss, howsoever brief its spell.

How can I possibly repay the debt I owe for His grace and generosity in my quest of Truth? Yet through this book, I can place on record my overwhelming gratitude. Maybe, some seekers of Truth may find this book of some help, in their difficulties.

Under the influence of Westernism, youth tend to be materialistic and atheistic. There is no point in being impatient with them, nor can we afford to neglect or ignore them. There can be no better approach to their hearts and minds than to unfold to them the great spiritual treasures we have inherited from our forbears. We must approach youth through a technique that will appeal to the hearts and minds of the intelligent and set them thinking.

In the present set-up, we cannot put our faith in things, unless we actually see their beneficial effects in our life. In fact, many people regard the realization of God, the quest for Truth and Religion itself as useless. They are not so much to blame for this attitude as some of the religious preachers who neither understand religious truths, nor live them in their actual lives, and hence fail to present the great truths to the World.

It is my firm belief that a correct interpretation of religion could transform. men into angels and this world into a paradise. Religion is not to blame. It is the stupid, selfish, short-sighted preachers of religion who are really to blame. The proper solution to the difficulties of the East and the West lies in a correct dissemination of the essence and core of religion.

From God's adoration, through Simran, or meditation, countless virtues flow. A stout heart and a clear mind result from it. We become capable of grasping subtleties. Even for worldly advancement, these two practices are essential. Meditation leads to perfect health. In the first place, the man of God is a man of health and even if he falls a prey to ill-health, it is easily cured through Simran, drugless or with the minimum use of drugs. In higher stages of spiritual advancement, the terror of disease and death is entirely eliminated.

Disease and pain, illusion and fear are shed
When, saith Nanak, the Creator dwells in our mind.

dukh bharam dard bhau nasia
karanhar Nanak man basia

Guru Arjan - Gauri.

Meditate on Him and you eliminate
Disease, sorrow, and pain.

rog sog sabh dukh binsahi
japat naam Murari

Guru Arjan - Gauri.

The angels of Death torment not those
Who live and move and have their being in God.

jo hari hari naam dhiainde
tin jamned na avai.

Guru Ramdas - Asa.

Men of God can cure disease by their spiritual powers. The man of Simran fully realizes the truth of Guru Gobind Singh's words,

By meditation, the body is radiant like gold.
And death draws not nigh.

sada rahe kanchan si kaia
kal na kabahu biape

Guru Gobind Singh.

When and if we are at one with God, we shed all fear of mishaps and death.

If we take refuge in God
The worldly maladies afflict us not
About us there rises a protecting bastion
Disease leaves us untouched, my brother.

tati vao na lagai Parbrahm sarnai
chaugird hamarai Ram kar dukh lagai na bhai

Guru Arjan - Bilawal.

The man of Simran, the man of God, has all his elementary needs satisfied without worry. Need and want are banished.

He who lives in God
Sheds destitution and want.

tis ki trishna bhukh sabh utrai
jo hari naam dhiavai

Guru Ramdas - Asa.

Through Simran we come to know how to be in union with God, and oneness with God endows us with heavenly powers and attributes, and then we secure that treasure which the entire world consciously or unconsciously seeks and strives to find.

I have found the hidden ruby.
I have found it, I have found it,
Blessed the place where Thou dwellest

Guru Nanak

When Thou art with me, cares I have none;
Since I am Thy Servant,
Thou hast entrusted all to me;
There is no want of wealth,
Eat and spend what we may;
All the lower species serve us
Thou hast created all,
Thou befriendest all,
Where are friends and foes?
When God forgives, who can call us to account?
I have realized God
And am supremely happy.
in Thy will, Thou wilt crown
All my deeds with success.

ja tu merai val hal ta kia mohchhanda
tudh sabh kichh mainu saopia ja tera banda
lakhmi tot na avai khai kharchi rahanda
lakh chaurasih medni sabh sev karanda
ih vairi mit sabhi kitia nahi manghe manda
lekha koi na puchhai ja hari bakhsanda
anand bhaia sukh paia mil gur govinda
sabhe kaj savariai ja tudh bhavanda

Guru Arjan - Maru War.

Is it not worthwhile trying and testing whether all these virtues really flow from Simran? Do we not strive our utmost and spend most of our time in trying to achieve much inferior objects? Is not the misuse of our God-given faculties responsible for our failures, disappointments, and distractions?

The man of Simran, the man of God, takes the whole world as his patrimony, and goes about as the master of the world. All forces of the world are with him, for they are an inheritance from his Father in Heaven. He knows the meaning of the sacred verse,"Man, Thou art the Lord of this earth" and he is imbued with a kingly nature, for he realizes his Father as King of Kings.

The man of Simran becomes aware of spiritual formulae, wheresoever he walks he communes with God. Wherever he is, God is with him.

Thou art my refuge at home and abroad,
Thou art with Thy servant ever

ghar bahar tera bharvasa
tu jan kai hai sang

Guru Arjan - Dhanasri.

By God's grace the man of Simran first overcomes evil tendencies and thereby acquires control over mind and matter, and when there is nothing more to gain, he cheerfully lays himself at the feet of his Father, unites with Him and merges in Him and it seems that the son never was; while the Father abides for ever and ever, as if the existence of the son was a mere sport of the Father.

Now I am installed on the throne of God,
Merging into him, as the wave merges into the sea,
Ram and Kabir are now one,
They cannot be distinguished.

ab tau jai chadhe singhasan
mile hai sarangpani
Ram Kabira ek bhas hai
koi na sakai pachhani

Kabir - Ramkali.

A true seeker of Truth does indeed attain to this stage.

These lofty spiritual peaks are there for God-attuned souls to survey the world with divine vision and heavenly insight. There is nothing earmarked separately for Father and Son. If only we earnestly move one step towards the realm of the Spirit, the subtlest forces of creation will flock to us, and God moves post-haste to welcome us. If only we worship God earnestly and humbly if we but take a leap towards God, we should discover the truth of Bhai Gurdasji's words:

> If we move one step towards God,
> God advances a hundred steps to receive us.
>
> *Charan saran guru ek painda jae chal*
> *satguru kot painda age hoi let hai.*

Bhai Gurdas - Sawaye.

I have recorded my spiritual experiences in this book. Possibly, all of them may not fully conform to those of another God-centred soul. I claim no infallibility for myself.

My only aim is to create in my readers a desire, a craving to seek Truth, and to hearten my fortunate co-travellers on the spiritual path.

In the course of spiritual research, doubts and delusions must arise, and they impede progress. To have them resolved, we must seek the company of holy people or saints. But it is by no means easy to find true saints who really know the Truth as Guru Nanak knew it, or are in a position to guide others. In this book an attempt has been made to meet the need of such people, to some extent at least.

Some good souls hold that we must not divulge our spiritual experiences for the following reasons:

- the masses are not qualified to grasp spiritual truths and that, therefore they suffer more than they gain;
- spiritual knowledge is something very precious, and so it should not be vulgarized;
- if we reveal our spiritual experiences, we might be guilty of self-exaltation and vanity;

- if we give away spiritual gifts, we should be left spiritually weak and famished.

I have thoroughly weighed these four objections and I hold:

- Revelation of a spiritual experience does not by any means harm anybody. In our sacred Book, the spiritual truths have been lucidly and graphically depicted, and each and every Sikh is duty-bound to disseminate them.

- Spiritual truths are certainly rare, invaluable things. But due to keeping them sealed and hidden in our bosoms, and for want of dissemination, seekers of Truth have grown rare. Some people seem to think that spiritual knowledge is a hobby of leisured people, who have nothing else to do! On the other hand, there was a time when nobody was considered fit for material advancement or for any other vocation, unless he had first acquired spiritual knowledge. Instruction in spiritual matters was then a part of basic education.

- He who, with the best of intentions and for the common good, reveals his spiritual experiences, must reap as he sows. Nothing but good can come out of good. Pride is not the product of sincerity. To rise in others' esteem does engender humility in many, and a truly God-centred soul values his spiritual growth and spiritual gifts or exaltation far more than the world's esteem and honour.

- Spiritual gifts do not shrink or dwindle when we share them with others. In this case too, we can apply the rule, "as we sow, so shall we reap." If the motive in propagating and disseminating spiritual truths is pure, its fruit must be good and beneficial.

There was a time when I regarded meditation in seclusion alone as virtuous, and, in fact, a seeker of Truth must do so in the initial stages. I acquired a love for Simran from my grandmother. For about 25 years I performed Simran in seclusion, and even my wife and children and friends never knew anything about it. I used to wake up at dead of night and would go to bed early in the morning in secret. But after a certain stage in my spiritual progress, I thought it selfish to keep my spiritual experiences to myself. To put our experiences before humanity is to enrich and extend the stock of human experience. As Madame de Stael puts it, "Search for Truth is the noblest occupation of man and its publicity is a duty."

In this book I have made an attempt to narrate my personal experiences briefly and faithfully, without any exaggeration or embellishment. By so doing I have not lost anything spiritually; in fact, it has done me much good and as I progressed with my manuscript, many of my thoughts were clarified and confirmed.

The more water we draw from a well, the more and fresher water sprouts from the bottom. Our spiritual stock does not shrink or dwindle by sharing it with others; in fact, it increases. About this spiritual treasure, the Guru says

> If the brotherhood of man spend the spiritual treasure lavishly,
> It shrinks not, dwindles not.
> Saith Nanak, this treasure is shared by those
> On whom descends His grace.

> *Khaveh harcheh ral mil bhai*
> *tot na avai vadho jai*
> *kaho Nanak jis mastak lekh likhai*
> *so et khajanai laia ralai.*

Guru Arjan - Gauri.

Chapter 2

What is a Sikh?

Literally, the word “Sikh” means a student, one who is anxious to learn, a seeker of Truth; a seeker of divine knowledge. The true Sikh grooms his body, faces all temptations, all allurements of mammon, earns his living with the sweat of his brow, meets his domestic commitments, serves his family, his parents, his kith and kin and friends, his country and the human race-and yet, in thought, stands unaffected and disentangled. And in the course of his daily routine, he gives the first and foremost place to the problem of knowing his real Self. Whichever role he plays, the desire to understand the mystery of life keeps him fully occupied. He has full faith in his objective. He is, therefore, an embodiment of optimism and unshakable resolve.

No attractions of the world, no temptations, no allurements, no hurdles can deflect the innate desire of the true Sikh to realize God. He might suffer defeat temporarily, but he cannot be entirely conquered.

The Sikh has full faith in Guru Nanak-the same faith that the child has in its mother. He believes that while holding fast to Guru Nanak, he can find his way through the Vanity Fair, through the milling multitudes, through the dust and din, without losing his way. He has full faith-not blind faith-in the World of the Master. He strives to fully grasp the Word of the Master. He knows that without understanding, and without divine knowledge, our deeds cannot be flawless. The Sikh, therefore, despite his faith in the truth of the Word, is daring enough to try to understand it and to act upon it. He tests it on the touchstone of his own experience.

The Sikh knows, too, that his research is the most arduous of all researches in the world. Impatience and restiveness will not lead anywhere. He is,

therefore, firm and unshakable as a rock in his perseverance. He pauses where he fails to follow the Master's Word. He prays for Light humbly, beseechingly, reverently, and waits patiently for response to his prayers. He knows that God's storehouse is bountiful, but each one of us receives gifts according to our individual circumstances, and fair needs. The Sikh, therefore, waits and watches like the true lover.

Hafiz has well said, "Some day you will be at one with God, if you have patience enough." The Sikh knows that he is to rise from the human level to that of Super-consciousness and these two levels are poles as under. This gap has to be bridged and all the distance in between to be traversed. This cannot be done in a day or two-it would be a rare piece of luck if the objective is realized in a lifetime. Patience and faith are, therefore, his constant companions in his journey.

Failures do not deter the Sikh. The baptism of steel makes him a perfect soldier. He can resist, with the force of arms, falsehood, oppression, injustice. Similarly, he is constantly at war with his own Self, his lower nature, with his frailties and the manifold misfortunes that arise from such weaknesses. He hacks his way through sin, trampling it to forge his way ahead. The Sikh's mind is a battlefield where he ever battles with the old Adam in him.

Baptism, Sikh discipline, or maryada, recitation of the Word, Kirtan, or chanting and listening to God's praises, are all necessary. But the true Sikh must also know that all these are means to an end; they are not in themselves the goal. The central aim and aspiration of the Sikh is to see God, to realize God to be one with God. He who is perfectly conscious of his end and aim, must, sooner or later, realize his objective.

At one time, I regarded the study of Sikh history, and listening to the tales of Sikh martyrs as the core of Sikhism and was prone to quip and twit the recitation of the Word and lovers of Nam. As I advanced in spiritual enlightenment, I took more delight in the sacred Word than in the old Sikh chronicles. I felt contented with listening to Kirtan, with Word-recitation with Gurdwara-going, and with formal poring over the sacred Book. But this did not fully satisfy me. My soul hungered and thirsted for abiding bliss.

> He Who was, is, and ever shall be with us
> My soul yearns for Him, for Him alone

Love for God ever abides with us,
The Perfect, Merciful One ever sustains us,
He fades not, nor can we do without Him,
He dwells in all we see,
Oh, the Beautiful, All-wise Sustainer of Beings!
God is Father, Brother, Mother, and Son,
He is Life of my life, my all,
I loved Him and He dwelt in my heart,
The Merciful One snapped as under the bonds of illusion,
He cast His Gracious Look and made me His own;
I remembered Him and all my ills were at an end,
I dwelt at His feet and all was bliss,
The Perfect One ever young and fresh
He sustains us within and without,
Nanak has found God,
The wealth of Nam hath God
Vouchsafed to His devotee.

adi madh jo ant nibahai
so sajan mera man chahai
hari ki prit sada sang chale
daial purkh puran pritipalai
binsat nahi chhod na jai
jah pekha tah rahia samai
sundar sugharh chatar jia data
bhai put pita prabh mata
jiwan pran adhar meri rasi
prit lai kar ridai nivasi
maia silak kati Gopal
kar apna lino nadar nihal
simar simar kate sabh rog
charan dhian sarab sukh bhog
puran purakh navtan nit bala
hari antar bahar sang rakhvala
kaho Nanak hari hari pad chin
sarab so nam bhagat kao din

Guru Arjan - Gauri.

Then I began to read the Word in a different manner. Intelligently and lovingly, I read the Sacred Book from end to end half a dozen times and I

found two central, essential points, namely, God, and His realization through Nam. I should not say that it was an easy job, or perfectly smooth sailing. But all my labour, all my plodding was but a trifle as compared to the peace contentment, and bliss that I experienced. When I see people drudging and slaving for materialistic trifles, I congratulate myself on my rare, good fortune to have obtained a priceless boon for my efforts, which were by no means Herculean.

Chapter 3

GURBANI - Guru's Word

Through the Word, I realized the Supreme objective,
The Perfect Master sustained me,
Through the Guru's Word, I meditated on him,
Through His Grace, I attained state of Bliss
Through listening to and reciting the Guru's Word, I had a vision of Him,
Through the Guru's Word, ambrosia was on my lips,
Through the Guru's Word, I became dead to self
Through the Guru's Word, I was raised high from lowly depths,
Through the Gurus Word, my illusion was dispelled,
Through the Guru's Word, I found God all pervading
Through the Guru's Word, I was in union with God,
While dwelling in the world as a householder.
Through the Master, all are sustained
Through the Guru's Word, all comes right,
Through the Guru's Word, I found all boons,
He whose thoughts are centred on Him
Is free from the noose of death
Through the Guru's Word, my good fortune awakened,
Through the Guru, I realized the Transcendent God.

Guru Arjan - Gauri.

gur kai bachan mohi paramgati pai
gur pure meri paij rakhai
gun kai bachan dhiaio mohi nao
gur parsadi mohi milia thao- rahao

gur kai bachan suni rason vakhani
gur kirpa te amrit meri bani
gur kai bachan mitia mera ap
gun ki daia te mera vad partap
gur kai bachan mitia mera bharam
gur kai bachan pekhio sabh Brahm
gur kai bachan kino raj jog
gur kai sang land sabh log
gur kai bachan mere karaj sidhi
gur kai bachan paia nao nidhi
jini jini kini mere gur ki asa
tis ki katiai jam ki phasa
gur kai bachan jagia mera karam
Nanak gur bhetia Parbrahm.

Guru Arjan - Gauri.

3.1 The Place of the Guru's Word

The Word of the Guru - and not his physical body is our guide. We venerate the mortal frame of the Guru and deem it sacred, for out of it emanates the Word, which transforms a man into an angel. The Word, as contained in the Sacred Book-that is to say, the Word of Guru Nanak and his successors and of other saints are their teachings; they are a vision of their souls, of their Spirit, of their life-experiences. For this reason, the Guru Granth is as venerable as the corporeal frame of the Gurus':

The Word is the Guru, the Guru is the Word,
The Word is all Nectar.

bani guru guru hai bani
vich bani amrit sare

Guru Ramdas - Nat.

The Word is the image of God.

satgur bachan bachan hai satgur
padhar mukati janavaigo

Guru Ramdas - Kaurha.

3.1.1 The Supremacy of the Guru's Word

The mental state of the speaker induces a similar mental state in the hearer. The Word is a magic force. The Guru's Word emanated from the sublime state of mind, in which Ego was non-existent and God was all pervasive, where "I am-ness" ceased to be, yielding place to God. The mind of the reader and listener rises from low levels to subtle and sublime planes of the Spirit, where we have a vision of Heavenly bliss.

The Word came from on High,
It dispelled all cares.

dhur ki bani ai
tin sagli chint mitia

Guru Arjan - Sorath.

Regard the Guru's Word as Truth entire,
The Creator's Word rang through the Master's lips.

Satgur ki bani sati sati kar janoh gur sikho
hari karta api muho kadhae

Guru Ramdas - Gauri.

Since the Word emanates from God, who is without animus, the hearer and reader of the Word is also transported to those very heights. This is why the Word, if read or listened to intently, is enough to make us fearless, malice less, and serene.

3.2 The Guru's Word is a panacea for all mental ills

Just as the Materia Medica is an encyclopedia of all bodily diseases and their remedies, so the Sacred Granth is an encyclopedia of all ills of the mind and their remedies. Those suffering from diseases of the mind can derive peace of mind through the study of the Guru's Word.

The reader, irrespective of his frame of mind, who pores over the Sacred Book, regarding it as his guide, finds guidance suited to his needs and he feels drawn to it. As his mental state undergoes a change, so does he finds guidance adapted to his changed state, on the pattern of the ideal Teacher. Those verses have the most potent appeal that evokes a proper response from the mind. Thus, the more we study the Guru's Word, the newer the revelation, with a new meaning, a new significance, a new concept. The Guru's Word continues to guide, till the stage of perfection is attained.

3.2.1 How to judge the spiritual state

No one can be always in an unvarying, uniform, spiritual state, In the Guru Granth, there are instructions for different spiritual stages. Most Sikhs find it hard to judge which verses of the Sacred Book suit their spiritual state, or befit the growth and development of their spirit. To grapple with this difficulty, I adopted a profitable technique - the verses that I could fully understand and that particularly appealed to me, I interpreted as directions for my spiritual uplift. There are some to whom verses inspiring renunciation and detachment, Vairag, have a special appeal; there are others who love verses on Nam and devotion to God; there are still others who love verses bearing on Gyan, or Knowledge of the Godhead. Or it could be that the same person, in the course of his spiritual researches, is at one time attracted and moved by verses on renunciation and detachment; at another time, by verses breathing and inspiring humility and prayerfulness, devotion and Yam, and Divine Knowledge in turn. The obvious reason for this state of affairs is that particular guidance is necessary for a particular spiritual state.

3.2.2 Self-contradictory Views in the Book?

At times, we come across verses at apparent variance with one another. For instance, there is a verse

Arise, my playmate and friend,
let us be up and doing,
Let us be at one with God, our Spouse.

sun sakhie mil udam kareha
manai lahe hari kanta

Guru Arjan - Gauri.

There are also the following verses

My God, he whom Thou holdest by the hand,
Is set on the path leading to Thee.

Prabhu bah pakar jis marag pavoh
so tudh jant milasi

Guru Arjan - Kanrha.

Or,

Meditation, austerities, practice of creeds and conventions,
Purificatory practices and mechanics of self-discipline,
Oh, Salvation lies not
through them.

Jap tap nem such sanjam
nahi in bidhe chhutkar

Guru Arjan - Kanrha.

Viewed cursorily, the precepts are contradictory. In the first instance, emphasis is on self-effort to be at one with God, and in the other verses, we are told that God cannot be realized through self-effort, meditation, austerities, or the recitation of sacred verses; only he finds Him, whom He blesses with His grace, and draws unto Himself by holding his hand and leading him unto Himself, thereby pulling him out of the 'Bottomless well'. But these verses are not contradictory; they are varying hints for people in varying spiritual stages.

3.2.3 Self-effort and God's will

We begin our meditation with seeming effort. But when the inner eye is opened through practice, we find that in all our repeated efforts, God's Will operates; His Hand is present and so is His Grace. At the back of every impulse, every thought, every step, it is God's Will. His Command. Then the seeker of God finds that all his past life was the foundation of, and a preparation for, his present trends. He finds a great change in his ideology. He views all happenings of the world, all facets of his life, from a new angle, this is inevitable. An ordinary mortal can be turned into an angel only through a change in ideology. There are merely differences of ideas and ideals between the saint and the fool.

3.2.4 Patience and Effort essential

If we fail to grasp the Guru's Word, we must not give up through a sense of defeatism. We must humbly pray for light. Patience and hopeful perseverance pay richer dividends in spiritual research work than in researches in other fields. A true seeker of God must, in the words of the poet, Urfi, aim thus

If, 0 Urfi, tears could achieve union with God,
I would fain weep hopefully for a hundred years.

Patience is a force, a spate which no impediment can stop. Watching and waiting with cheerful patience, and holding fast to our quest for God, all honest doubts are resolved through the Sacred Word.

3.2.5 The Guru's Word the Kalpatru Tree

To scholars, the Guru's Word is an ocean of knowledge; to the Enlightened ones, a repository of Divine Knowledge; to God's devotees, a treasure-house of godly devotion ; and to worldly-minded people, a fountain-head of peace. The Tyagis (practitioners of renunciation), Sanyasins and Mahatmas in forests, princes on their thrones, worldings in their worldly affairs- all kinds of people, of all ages, of diverse spiritual strata, even thieves, rakes, robbers, cheats, one and all, how to the Guru's Word and derive peace from it, according to their individual needs. The Guru's Word transcends all praise, for its Fountain-head, that is God, is transcendent. It emanates from Truth, is the Image of Truth, and by its touch, it draws us towards Truth, and shapes us in the mould of Truth.

3.2.6 Material and Spiritual Benefits

The Guru's Word breathes peace for the moment, as well as abidingly. It helps us to clear the hurdles of daily life. It cheers and invigorates, while detaching us from the fleeting and illusory pleasures of the world, unfolding treasures of the realm of the spirit, ushering us into the presence of the King of kings, and rendering us worthy of life on sublime spiritual planes.

3.2.7 Mental Attitude During Study

We must be as guileless as children, pure-minded and full of faith and love, when reading the Guru's Word. We must look upon the Sacred Book as in

loco parentis, with an earnest desire to seek the Sacred Presence for sage counsel. This is not idolatry. If you are so minded, read but a page or more. Feel as if you were in the presence of a perfect Master.

Sitting at the Sacred Book, in moments of extreme difficulty and distraction, I felt as if I was in the sacred presence of Guru Arjan Dev! May be, this feeling was due to my helplessness or my faith, but it was so sweet. I have often remembered this joy as one lovingly cherishes a happy dream. When, the thirsty deer in a sandy desert sees a rippling lake of refreshing water in the distance, the poor creature is in ecstasy. Of course, what it sees is only a mirage, but at that moment its joy exceeds all bounds. Similarly, the spiritual seeker's ideal ever grows into something higher, the journey ahead seems more weary and long, and yet when we are dead tired and broken and helpless, our thoughts revert to flashes of bliss experienced during the sublimated state of our mind.

3.2.8 The Guru's Word and Mind

We should clasp the Guru's Word to our heart, let it dye our mind. We should shed our ego and our egoistic notions, purge our mind of egoism, and let the Guru's Word work its way into our mind and heart. Thus, the Guru's Word will transform us more easily, and our pace of spiritual progress will quicken. We shall understand the core of the Guru's Word more easily, and shall begin to view the working of the World in its proper perspective.

3.2.9 The Magic of the Guru's Word

When we study the Guru's Word in this spirit, we see its miraculous effect even in this materialistic age. An honest seeker of Truth is inevitably assailed by honest doubts. There is nothing wrong about this uncertainty, nor does any shame attach to it. These doubts are but natural and inevitable. The Guru's Word, however, dispels the doubts of sincere spiritual seekers, and answers all essential questions. The seeker progresses spiritually by leaps and bounds, if only he holds fast to the Guru's Word.

> The Master is the Word, the Word the Master,
> The spiritual wayfarer will be free of bonds through it.

> *Satgur bachan bachan hai satgur*
> *padhar rnukti janavaigo*

Guru Ramdas - Kanrha.

Chapter 4

The Congregation

4.1 Man's Nature

By nature, man is patterned according to the social mould into which he is thrown. The environment, the climate, and training affect his physical and mental make-up. There is an old saying, "Man is the result of environment." Those who live in the company of thieves, robbers, lecherous rakes, are moulded accordingly. Scholars, heroes, and generous souls similarly affect those who keep their company. Likewise, those who keep the company saints of are shaped in the divine mould. Association is a great force and like every other force, it may be used well or ill. it is thus obvious that association plays a great role in the shaping of man. it is, therefore, of prime importance that we should seek the company of the virtuous, and eschew that of the evil. This is essential for setting the spiritual wayfarer on the right path. Good company could be of three kinds -(a) good books, (b) virtuous people, (c) keeping company with the Universal Soul.

It is essential to bear in mind that the company of good books and good souls is a means to, and a preparation for, being at one with the Infinite Soul. That is the ultimate goal of every spiritual seeker.

4.2 The company of Books

Thanks to the Press and the facilities for publication of books, any number of books for the uplift of thought and character are now easily available. We must purchase books according to the stage of our development, as that

would be very useful for spiritual growth. Books must be selected with much care.

The study of books is not yet very popular in our land; consequently, our minds remain cabined, cribbed, and confined. We therefore do not think objectively. Good books have manifold uses. In fact, books are in some ways more useful than the company of great souled people, for only in books can we see the brighter side of the author's life. In a book we get a glimpse of the author's inner nature, his wealth of experience, and his personality. We, therefore, profit from his good points.

Censurious, fault-finding people pick holes in all they see about them, and this is a hindrance to spiritual growth, whereas he who sees good in everything becomes virtuous-minded; he sees goodness and beauty pervading the universe. When we study great books, we keep off the dark, imperfect, and thorny side of human nature, and we dwell with the beneficial, beautiful and pure aspects of man.

Another distinguishing feature of books, as compared with good people of flesh and blood, is that they bring us into contact with great and good men of the past. We can also contact living great souls in any part of the world, at any time, through the medium of books. Good books are proving a great source of spiritual progress. Therefore, it is essential for spiritual seekers to utilize good books.

> They alone are virtuous companions,
> in whose company we meditate on God,
> Keep not company with those, saith Nanak,
> who are full of Selfness
>
> *sachi baisak tina sang*
> *jin sang japiai nao*
> *tin sang sang na kichai*
> *Nanak jin apna suao*

Guru Arjan - Var Gujri.

4.3 The Company of Good Souls

The powerful personality of great souls instantly affects the mind. In many cases it revolutionizes our whole life. Many a life has been reformed through

contact with great souls. The great object of associations is to elevate the soul. The living, glowing touch of great souls creates an ecstatic thrill in our life. With all my faith in the Guru Granth, I have been associating with Mahatmas with devotion, respect and affection. Great souls, at times, easily resolve deep mysteries and tangled problems. A good soul helps us onward according to our spiritual state. The handicap about books is that we have to pursue research ourselves; we seek the way according to our spiritual condition. Consequently, the pace of progress is rather slow. In a great soul, we get glimpses of the idea] man. If and when we contact somebody leading an ideal life, it encourages, enthuses, and inspires us, and then it becomes easier for us to mould our lives accordingly.

They alone are our real friends whose company washes
away our sins.
To seek them, I leave no stone unturned
Few and far between are such good souls.

jinan disandarhian durmat vanjai
mitar asadrhe sei
hau dhudhed jag sabaia
jan Nanak virle kei

Guru Arjan - Gujri.

4.3.1 The Glory of Great souls

Great souls have, at times, sublime spiritual experiences that cannot possibly be expressed through the printed word, nor can the human tongue give expression to them.

The Vedas, the Puranas, the Simritis have their version of things
But sublimer far are the experiences of men of God.

bed puran simriti bhane
sabh uch birajit jan sune

Guru Arjan - Gauri.

The greatness of a saint is beyond the Vedas.
The Vedas describe only what is expressed.

sadh ki mahema bed na janeh
jeta suneh teta bakhianeh

Guru Arjan - Gauri Sukhmani.

In these verses of the Sacred Book there is a reference to the intuitive powers of a saintly soul. The saint in his sublimer states is at one with God, and just as God is inscrutable and indescribable, so does the saint defy description. Swami Vivekananda, says:

> The soul can only receive impulses from another soul and from nothing else. We may study books all our lives, we may become very intellectual, but in the end we find, that we have not developed at all spiritually. It is not true that a high order of intellectual development goes hand in hand with a proportionate development of the spiritual side in man. In studying books we are sometimes deluded into thinking that hereby we are being spiritually helped, but if we analyse the effect of study on ourselves we shall find that, at the utmost, it is only our intellect that has derived benefit from such studies, but not our inner spirit. This insufficiency of books to quicken spiritual growth is the reason why although every one of us can speak most wonderfully on spiritual matters, when it comes to action and the living of a truly spiritual life, we find ourselves awfully deficient. To quicken the Spirit the impulse must come from another soul.

4.3.2 Difficulty in recognising a genuine saint

One particular difficulty in recognising a genuine saint is that people in general cannot distinguish a saint from an impostor. Saints are averse to the limelight of publicity. To be able to associate with saints, we have to seek them out, and lovers of ease, as we are today, we are not prepared to take such pains. No wonder, gullible people are taken in by deceptive, hypocritical sadhus and impostors! The true saint need not necessarily be in the guise of a sadhu. There are householders, living in the world, who have attained to a sublime, spiritual state. Association with them is indeed conducive to genuine peace of mind.

4.3.3 Who is a saint?

A saint is he who has through Nam, through meditation, through intuition, realized God.

There is a world of difference between the saint and the philosopher. The saint perceives God and is at one with Him. The philosopher does not perceive God; he strives to understand God according to his own understanding, and propagates his views accordingly. The saint's words come from his heart and create peace and repose of mind among his hearers. Not that what the saint says is devoid of reason. He who has realized God stands not in need of reasoning; he is in touch with the Living Source of life, he sees God face to face and speaks of Him accordingly. He does not need the crutches of reasoning.

This is true of the saints -
They say what they observe

santan ki sun sachi sakhi
so bolaih jo pekhaih akhi

Guru Arjan - Ramkali.

Nanak's King stands in His blaze of glory.
Nanak ka patsaho disai jahra

Guru Arjan - Asa.

When we cannot see something, we require some evidence of its existence. But when we can see it, there is no need to prove that it exists.

4.3.4 Knowledge and Intuition

Paul Duessen, in his well-known book, writes, "There is great difference between knowledge in which subject and object are distinct from each other and *anubhawa* (absorption into our own self) where subject and object coincide in the same."

Similarly, C. Lanyon, says,"inspiration (anubhawa), so far transcends knowledge that there is no possible way of comparing the two."

I have been associating with great souls, be they householders, or ascetics, who have through Simran or Nam, realized God, and recommend the process to others.

Whoever wishes to see God, know Him, realize Him, and claim Him as his own, must seek the association of God-attained souls. Association with such souls creates the urge to realize God, and this urge cannot be satiated till the goal is achieved. Light enkindles light, and those in whom the light burns bright, ignite extinguished lights through their impact.

4.3.5 How to Associate with a Saint

We must never try to test a saint. Neither should we enter into a controversy with him. All that we may do is to seek his guidance on points on which we need light. The thirsty sparrow goes to a stream to quench its thirst, and flies back gratefully. it does not bother to know the source of the stream or where it is bound for, or how deep it is. Nor does it waste thought on the future, as to whether the stream will or will not be there when it feels thirsty again.

I have followed these rules in my approach to saints, and have derived much good. There were some who were disposed to be incommunicative, and yet they found time for an exchange of views with me.

4.3.6 The Congregation

It is a fine daily practice among Sikhs to congregate with the Guru Granth duly installed, to expound verses from the Sacred Book, and to sing God's praises. It is conducive to spiritual development. In the congregation, there are some devotees of God, whose presence purifies and uplifts many. Daily congregation at a common place is useful both from the worldly as well as from the spiritual viewpoint. But since this tradition is rooted in the lives of the Sikhs and has been handed down from generation to generation, I need not dilate on its utility. Obviously, in the presence of the Guru Granth, only spiritual topics should be dealt with.

4.3.7 Association of the Soul with the infinite Soul

When the devotee finds the light dawning within, with the guidance of saints and their writings, he should look within, instead of dissipating his energies in external search. He should find within the joy and peace, which association with saints and their books used to bring him. As this introspection grows into a habit, he frees himself of the outer world and is at one with his soul within.

When the spiritual pilgrim has been for a time in such perfect harmony as a matter of routine, he has visions of God from within. He glimpses within himself a new home, and he dwells in it. Many such saints in this state appear among people, and among spiritual congregations. They have nothing more to gain from the outer world; they are there to help forward spiritual seekers and those 'who go astray. Association with God frees them of the need for other company. They experience their ecstatic joy in the Vision of God from within. As a climax, they are so united with God that they know of no separation from Him. This must be the objective of every Sikh, of every seeker of God. This must be the goal of every one of us.

In perfect peace and bliss, you dwell within yourself,
The cycle of birth and death ends

nij ghar mahil pavoh sukh sahje
bahur na hoego phera

Guru Arjan - Gauri Purbi.

You know Truth only
When you dwell within the Soul's shrine

sach ta par janiai
je atam tirath karai nivas

Guru Nanak - Asa-di-Var.

Chapter 5

Prayer

The prayer of a man of God is never fruitless.
birthi kade na havoi jan ki ardas

Guru Arjan - Bilawal.

What God's servant desires of his Master, is complied forthwith.
jo jo kahai thakur pahi sevak tat kal hoi avai

Guru Arjan - Asa.

Prayer is a personal talk with God, and it is a talk that may be of diverse kinds:

- for physical or material needs, or for spiritual uplift
- to seek God's help in our hours of trial and tribulation, in sickness and pain;
- to thank Him for His gifts and boons, and to seek their continuance;
- believing that our abiding gain lies in resigning ourselves to His Will and to implore Him to grant that we may submit to His pleasure;
- for the good and comfort of others.

The following conditions are the prerequisites of a fruitful prayer: firm faith in God's existence, in His power to grant the prayer, and in the soundness, propriety and efficacy of our prayer; love and reverence for God during prayer; and a pure, receptive heart.

In retrospect, I find that on account of my lurking doubts, some of my prayers remained unanswered, other received a delayed response, but I do not remember any time when the above conditions were fulfilled and yet the prayer remained unanswered. A prayer, offered with a firm faith and a humble heart is so readily granted that it leaves us astounded.

Prayers may be of two kinds congregational and individual. The former has been in vogue amongst the Sikhs since the times of the Gurus. Its uses are countless. It has played a mighty role in sustaining the Sikhs. The daily congregations, with psalm-singing, singing God's praises, and the collective, congregational prayer to Heaven, remembering the Gurus, the heroic sons of Guru Gobind Singh, the Sikh martyrs, both male and female, praying for the preservation of sacred shrines, sacred places, choirs, Sikh banners, Sikh resting places- the daily congregational prayer has been a splendid routine for keeping alive the Sikh way of life. The history of the Panth thus daily recapitulated, reviving old memories and traditions keeps alive the spark of Sikh fellow-feeling, the Sikh sense of self-respect and the Sikh traditions of self-sacrifice.

The second type of Ardas or prayer-that is, individual or personal prayer-of a Sikh may be elaborate, as is the congregational or Sikh prayer, or it may be short, couched in our own words, according to our individual needs and feelings. In this case, no special form, prescribed words, special technique or rhythm are needed. Only the mind must be shaped in a humble mould answering to the spirit of the sacred verse:

> I do not come into the picture, I am nowhere,
> I have nothing that I can call mine own.
>
> *mai nahi kachh hao nahi*
> *kichh ahe na mora*

Sadhna - Bilawal.

Such a prayer poured forth by the soul flies Heavenward. The language of the soul is not garbed in sonorous, high-pitched phrases. It is a language of thoughts.

When we learn how to pray correctly, the response is instantaneous. We have an ecstatic feeling. There is wonder, mixed with delight, at the actual materialization or fulfilment of the prayer.

Personal or individual prayer cannot possibly be uniform or stereotyped, for we are in varying stages of spiritual growth.

Pour forth thy heart's prayer to God,
Shed thy shrewdness,
Dedicate thyself, thy mind and body, to God.

jia ki birtha hoi so gur pahi ardas kari
chhodi sianap sagal manu tanu arapi dhari

Guru Arjan - Gujri-var-Gauri.

God cures all pains;
He is the bestower of comforts.
He who prays with faith suffers no ills.

tine tap nivaran hara dukh hanta sukh rasi
ta kau bighan na kou lagai
ja ki prabh agai ardas

Guru Arjan - Todi.

5.1 The first stage of prayer.

The common man prays for material gains. Most of us belong to this category. To pray for personal advancement in the world is not bad.

To seek anything save Thyself
Is to invite the greatest suffering
O Thou Embodiment of Content,
Grant me the boon of Nam, Thy Remembrance,
Then alone can I shed all yearning.

vinu tudh horu je mangna
sir dukha kai dukh
dehi namu santokhiai
utrai man ki bhukh

Guru Arjan - Ramkali Var.

Those who in the spirit of these sublime words of the Guru, deprecate a prayer for personal advancement, fail to see that the supreme gift of Nam, the crown and climax of all boons and gifts, and simultaneously to crave for ordinary material comforts leads nowhere. Acting thus, we grow hypocritical. It is no sin to pray for the common comforts of life-for instance, health, honourable life, freedom from pain, worry and sickness, and a happy home life. Saints, Gurus, Pirs have unreservedly sought these things of God, along with the supreme crown of Nam:

Protect me with Thy Protecting Hand,
Fulfil the desire of my heart,
May my heart lie at Thy feet!
I am Thine, nourish and sustain me!
Frustrate the evil designs of perverse people!
Save me with Thine own Hand!
May all my kith and kin be happy!
May all who follow me be happy!
Support and sustain all my followers,
Stamp out the perverse foes.

hamri karo hath de rachha
puran hoi chit ki ichha
tav charnan man rahai hamarai
apna jan karo pratipara
hamre dusht sabhe turn ghavhu
ap hath dai mohi bachavhu
sukhi basai moro parvara
sevak sikh sabai Kartara
sevak sikh hamare tariahi
chun chun satr harnare mariahi

Guru Gobind Singh - Chaupai Sahib

Dhanna Bhagat prays:

Hail, Hail, O Lord!
Thou helpest Thy servants.
I ask for pulse, flour, and butter,
I ask for decent clothes and shoes,
I ask for a milch-cow, or a milch she-buffalo,
I seek a fine Arab mare,
And a good wife.

Dhanna prays for these things.

Gopal tera arta
Jo jan tumri bhagat karante
tin ke kaj savarta - rahao
dali sidha magao ghio
hamra khusi karai nit jio
pania chhadun nika
anaju magao sat sika
gau bhais magao laveri
ik tajani turi changeri
ghar ki gihani changi
janu Dhana levai mangi.

Dhanna - Dhanasri.

5.2 The Second Stage of Prayer.

As we progress spiritually, our aspirations, yearnings and prayers change. We obtain greater delight in spiritual advancement than in personal comfort. All worldly pleasures strike us as transient, fleeting, and worthless. There is a prompting from within to the effect:

What can I ask for? Nothing abides.
mai kia magao kichhu thiru na rahai

Guru Nanak - Sorath.

As a child growing into adulthood ceases to hanker after toys and juvenile pleasures and pastimes, and develops an interest in things of higher value, so a spiritually advanced soul feels discontented with unabiding, fleeting pleasures of the world. If feels an inner urge for abiding comfort and joy and a prayer gushes forth from it:

I have in many lives deluded myself,
Eating, drinking, sporting, making merry;
Now help me across the fearful sea,
I seek Thy shelter.

khat pit khelat hasat bharme janam anek
bhavjal to kadhhu prabhu Nanak teri tek

Guru Arjan - Gauri.

At this stage, we are impelled to search and experiment, and to seek guidance. We feel:

> I know naught, I know not how to swim,
> All-pervading Father, lend me Thy helping hand.
>
> *mai ajanu janu taribe na janao*
> *bap bithula bah de*

Nam Dev - Gaund.

There arises a yearning to fathom the invisible realms of the spirit, and Heaven's help and inspiration descend to guide such a soul. Then begins a very difficult stage. We have to wrestle and struggle with our self. We have to shed our old convictions, old habits, old beliefs, and to assume new habits and new ways of life. At first, it is difficult to view the world from a new angle. On the one side, the lower self tends to pull us towards evil; the sweet memory of pleasures of the flesh attracts us many a time, we feel as if there can be no escape from the grip of alluring pleasures of the flesh. And on the other, the voice of the soul inspires and promises new hopes, new visions, new glimpses of a new world, all of which are so full of bliss and charm.

I once met a saint in this stage, and asked him how he felt.

He replied "I am faring ill," and when asked the reason why, he said, "I am neither here nor there; although I am averse to the allurements of the world, my wavering mind is not always centred on God. At times, the lower self dominates; and at times I render social service in a Gurdwara; I spend nights in reflection; sometimes I do things that the meanest of mortals would not do, and at other times there are flashes of saintly life. A life of mental conflict! This is no good. In the words of Shaikh Farid, 'I am full of sins and yet people call me a Darvesh or saint! Heaven help me there is no other help'.

> gunahi bharia mai phira
> loku kahai darvesu

Farid - Sloka.

After a few days' association with the saint, I found that to rid him of mental strife and as a precautionary measure, he had cut off his penis, but even then he had no peace of mind. Many a spiritual seeker despairs at this stage, and discards the pursuit of Truth. Many a time, in utter despair, I felt that the flights in the higher realm of the Spirit were not meant for me and that I was a creature of senses, and was destined to remain so! But one must not lose heart at this stage. For heroic souls, all difficulties vanish into thin air. Firm faith in God, and humble, heartfelt prayers work miracles. If today we lose heart in utter despair, the next day there is a surging sea of hope. The spiritual seeker wages war again with impediments. Victory seems at hand. Indeed, faith in God ripens when we find His strong, helping hand resolving our tangled mental state.

5.2.1 Physical and Mental Ailments

Maladies of the mind are infinitely more dreadful and dangerous than those of the body. We are anxious to be rid of maladies of the body, but ills of the mind taste sweet and even when we are fed up with them, we do not shed them. When we suffer from fever, we are over-anxious to be rid of it. Be it a sex or alcohol addict, in spite of his knowledge of their damaging effects, clings on to his vices. To be rid of the ills of the mind, deep, ardent and unceasing prayer is essential. The spiritual seeker should humbly pray:

I am a perverse, hard-hearted, deceitful rake,
Help me, Thou All-powerful,
Thou Omnipotent Shelter of all,
Meditations, austerities, purificatory rites,
Disciplinary exercises are unavailing
Be gracious and pull me out of the pitch darkness,
In which I am stranded.

kuchil kathor kapat kami
jio janoh tio tar suami- rahao
tu samrathu sarani jog
tu rakhahi apni kal dhari
jap tap nem such sanjam
nahi in bidhi chhutkar
garat ghor andh te kadhahu
Prabh Nanak nadari nihari

Guru Arjan - Maru.

How can you purify dust? Man is but dust.
mati ka kia dhopai suami manas ki gati ehi

Guru Arjan - Ramkali.

Save me, save me, 0 God!
I am helpless, my Lord,
Be gracious and grant me Thy Name!

ha ha Prabh rakhi lehu
ham te kichhu na hoi mere swami
kari kirpa apuna nam deho

Guru Arjan - Dhanasri.

The five deadly passions are Lust, Resentment, Greed, Infatuation and Egoism:

Preserve me, 0 Thou Preserver,
These passions are tormenting,
I seek shelter at Thy feet.

panch bikhadi eku gariba rakhahu rakhanhdre
khedu karhi aru bahutu santavhi
aio saran tuhdre

Guru Arjan - Gauri.

5.3 Third Stage of prayer

When the spiritual seeker transcends the second stage, he finds the lower self worsted in the combat. There is an indescribable feeling of ecstatic joy. The world looks beautiful and worth living in. Just as Nature looks fresh and green after a shower, so does the spiritual seeker, after his conquest of the sensual passions, find himself and the universe pure, radiant, and buoyant. He achieves concentration in devotional worship and recitations. He begins to feel at one with God.

5.3.1 The Furtive Inroads of Lower Self

The lower self is chastened and paralysed at this stage, but the strife is by no means entirely at an end. Now and then, all of a sudden, the old trends of the lower self repeat their attacks stealthily in our weak moments and occasionally overpower us. At times, we admit defeat, but as the lower self has lost its old vigour and virility, it is easily subdued. The recitation of the Word and our humble, hearty prayers come to our rescue and the lower self is again vanquished. The spiritual seeker is himself once again and buoyantly sets forth on the highroad to spiritual perfection. Kabir visualized this state thus:

If you renounce your hearth and home,
And dwell in forests, living on roots,
Still the passions will not loosen their hold on you,
How evil is our lower self!
How shall we be saved?
How shall we swim across the dreadful ocean?
Preserve me, preserve me, 0 Thou All-pervading Lord, I seek Thy Refuge.

grihu taji ban khand jaiai chuni khaiai kanda
ajahu bikar na chhodai papi man manda
kio chhutao kaise taron bhavjal nidhi bhari
rakhu rakhu mere bithla jan saran tumari

Kabir - Bilawal.

This silly self would not see reason,
I am sick of admonishing it.

man murakh ajahu nah samjhat
sikh dai hario nit

Guru Tegh Bahadur - Dev Gandhari.

5.4 Fourth Stage of Prayer

To transcend the third stage is tantamount to dwelling in, and enjoying the bliss of paradise.

Though the lower self ever clings to us in some shape or form, yet it gradually weakens and instead of pricking us like a thorn, feels soft, sweet smelling and graceful as a flower. Whereas it was once elusive, delusive, and restless, it is now in a habitual state of peace, poise, and bliss. It is the soul's stage of *Sahej*. Out of *Sahej*, arises that mood of spiritual inebriation that is known as "dying" in Gurbani. In this state, we are ever fill of habitual bliss:

Mother, I have found inexhaustible wealth, that is, Har Nam,
My mind has ceased to wander and is ever at rest.

mai mai dhan paio har nam
manu mero dhavan te chhutkio kari baitho bisram

Guru Tegh Bahadur - Basant.

As the mind is poised in this state, it feels that it is not unaided and abandoned as it once was. It begins to feel the presence and company of an All-powerful, All-intelligent Force. There are times when a mere touch of this Force gives birth to ineffable thrills of ecstasy. I shall revert to this topic under the chapter entitled "Simran". Here, it is enough to say that those in this stage do not pray for personal comforts or worldly advancement. They are ever full of bliss and peace. Their prayers are outpourings of gratitude.

0 Lord, who else could have worked this miracle?
Thou Exalter of humble people
Elevate the poor and downtrodden, to positions of dignity.

aisi lal tujh bin kaun karai
garib nivaju gusaia mera mathai chhatar dharai

Bhagat Ravidas - Maru.

Naturally, one craves to abide with this Inner Power for the maximum length of time. This power is ever on the up-grade, in full vigour and free from care. The mind feels that the voice of this Force has ever been a calling. He who is blessed with this mood surrenders all his troubles, all his woes to this Blessed Force and abides carefree. He feels confident that he can win all his battles, overcome all his difficulties, with the aid of this mighty power. He who has attained to this state prays like this:

Thou art my father, Thou art my mother,
Thou art my kith and kin,
Thou art my protector everywhere,
how can there be any fear or trouble for me?
With Thy grace, I have known Thee, Thou art my refuge,
I am proud of Thee, Thou alone art, this drama is all Thine.

tun mera pita tu hai mera mata
tun mera bandhap tu mera bhrata
tun mera rdkha sabhni thai
ta bhau keha karha jio

Guru Arjan - Majh.

5.5 Fifth Stage of prayer

In this spiritual state, we are convinced that the in-dwelling, All-intelligent power within us is far wiser and mightier than ourselves, and that it is our sincere friend. This Power is our constant protector and helps us to grow and flourish. We find that our own cares and devices are mere impediments in the way of this Power. When we are thoroughly convinced of the potency and greatness of this Power, we become carefree, and rapturously sing:

Thou art the refuge of all life,
Thou takes care of all,
Sweet and supremely good is Thy Will,
This is Nanak's prayer.

jia jant sabhi saran tumari
sarab chint tudhu pase
jo tudhu bhavai soi changa
ik Nanak ki ardase.

Guru Nanak - Bilawal.

Even in moments of supreme crisis, we find this Power an unfailing friend and jubilantly sing:

Supremely good is Thy Will,
Thou art ever and ever and ever, 0 Lord.

jo tudh bhavai sai bhali kar
tu sada salamat Nirankar

Guru Nanak - Japu.

At the end of this stage, the spiritual seeker's prayers become unnecessary, for he feels that Mighty Power already conscious of his subtlest feelings and conceptions, which leads him to sing:

Thou art present wherever I seek Thee,
This conviction has grown in me.
To whom am I to pray,
Thou knowest all unsaid, 0 Lord!

jat kat dekhao tat tat tumhi
mohi eho bisuas hoi aio
kai pahi karao ardasi benti
jao sunato hai Raghuraio

Guru Arjan - Gauri.

God knows all, even our innermost thoughts,
To whom then should we offer our prayers?

Hari antarjami sabh bidhi janai,
ta kisu pahi akhi sunaiai.

Guru Arjan - Sorath.

What prayer must Thy humble creature offer?
Thou dwellest in all.

kia dinu karai ardas jao
sabh ghat Prabhu niwas

Guru Arjan

5.6 Sixth Stage of Prayer

In the final stage of adoration, the Beloved becomes the Lover; the Loser the Beloved. The All-intelligent power in this stage is ever ready to fulfill the will of the adorer. Even the slightest of his wishes materializes:

Whatever His saints conceive, He fulfils.
jo jo chitvahi sadh jan so leta man

Guru Arjan - Bilawal.

Wherever His servant seeks,
God is there and appears by His servant's side,
What the servant desires of his Master is granted.

jah jah kaj kirti sewak ki taha taha uth dhavai
sewak kau nikti hoi dikhavai
jo jo kahai thakur pahi sewak tatkal hoi awai

Guru Arjan - Asa.

The mind becomes as purified as the water of the Ganga,
Even God craves to look after such a devotee of His.

Kabir manu nirmal bhaia jaisa Ganga nir
pachhai lago Hari phirai kahat Kabir Kabir

Kabir - Sloka.

How can Thy child starve, when Thou art the Father?
Thou hast inexhaustible treasures of the world and of Nam,
The child will have what it desires,
The Father in His grace commands,
Give the child what he asks for.
Thy child Nanak, 0 Lord, seeks to see Thee
May Thy Lotus Feet ever dwell in my heart.

jiska pita tu hai mere suami tis barik bhukh kaisi
navnidhi nam nidhan grah terai
man bachhai so laisi
pita kirpali agia eh dini
bariku mukh magai so dena
Nanak barik darasu Prabh chahai
mohi hirdai basahi nit charana

Guru Arjan - Malar.

At this stage, prayer reaches its climax. Every wish of the adorer is fulfilled unuttered, unsolicited, automatically, by the Power who knows the inner secrets of all hearts.

The devotee's prayer is never unavailing.
Birthi kade na hovai jan ki ardas

Guru Arjan - Bilawal.

Having reached this stage, the adorer transcends the stage of demands. He understands the philosophy of prayer. He knows that prayers go forth, so long as one is imperfect. When by the grace of God one has achieved perfection, what can or will one ask for? Worldly treasures lie at one's feet. The beggar is turned into the master!

We are neither here nor there;
He is everywhere
He alone is.

ham kichhu nahi ekai ohi
agai pachhai eko soi
Nanak guri khoe bhram bhanga
ham oimili hoe ek ranga

Guru Arjan - Asa.

5.6.1 Need for Prayer.

Prayer is essential, no matter in what spiritual state we may be. Prayer helps to fulfill all our physical needs as well as the highest and most sublime of our spiritual demands. Prayer humbles and purifies our mind. For the spiritual seeker, it is as indispensable as the stick to a blind man.

Talk not of crows and herons,
His grace turns crows into swans.

kia hans kia bagula ja kao nadar dhare
jo tis bhavai Nanaka kagahu hans kare

For all thy needs, implore God,
Have firm faith, and you will realize your objective.

kita loriai kamu su Hari pai akhiai
karaj dei sawari satigur sachu sakhiai

Guru Nanak - Siri Rag.

Chapter 6

Simran - Rememberance of God

Having pored over the Sastras and Simartis and Vedas,
The great-souled saints say,
There is no salvation without Nam.
None has achieved abiding bliss without Nam.

sasat simrati bed bichare
maha purkhan io kahia
bin Hari bhajan nahi nistara
sukh na kinhu lahia

Guru Arjan - Gauri.

Simran is the ladder leading to God. It is hard to climb heavenward without Nam. Some masters conceive Simran to be the essence of worship. By the study of spiritual books, by hearing the words of pure souls, we are prompted to be at one with God, the Fountainhead. Through Simran, we begin to walk on the path leading to God. Studying a Guide to London, wakes the desire to visit London, but to do so we must need leave our hearth and home and undertake a voyage. Simran is the soul's voyage to ethereal regions, which transforms us from baseness into sublimity. The divine knowledge that we acquire through Simran, becomes part and parcel of our being. Without Simran, knowledge sharpens the mind and worsens our previous state. There is a world of difference between a hair-splitting philosopher, and those who, through Simran, acquire divine knowledge. The teachings of good souls and

the words of sages recorded in books cannot by themselves create faith. He alone can have the fortitude to be sawn alive who has firm faith in union with God after death. He alone can mock death, who is at one with the Source of life.

Nam is the only thing worthy of praise
Without Nam, we are naught
Worldly position and wealth are but fleeting things
They come and go.

isu jug mahi sobha nam ki
bin navai sobh na hoi
eh maya ki sobha char dihade
jadi bilam na hoi.

Guru Amardas - Asa.

- Simran washes and purifies the mind and helps it to concentrate. The wandering mind is feeble; the concentrated mind is strong and capable of deep thought. Many books deal with mental concentration, but Simran alone provides the most convenient and effective means for concentration.
- In the concentrated state of mind, Simran creates a yearning to realize God. Simran, unlike other methods, helps us to be at one with our original Self, which automatically results in dislike for worldly pleasures.
- It creates a wondrous ecstasy in the soul, and the greater the ecstasy, the greater the aversion to sensual pleasures.
- The concentrated mind tries to know and realize the soul and the Infinite Soul.
- Simran saves the mind from wavering. It stabilizes its concentration and does not permit its derailment.
- Simran tends to keep God's attributes constantly before us and thus these permeate our being.
- Simran lightens and calms the mind.
- Simran exterminates the illusion of egoism or selfness
- It makes the mind at one with God.

The Two Ways of Simran are:

- The Guru's Word.
- Nam.

Distinction between Nam and the Sacred Word Gurbani comprises the daily recitation of the prescribed and other portions of the Scriptures, repetition of a particular verse or verses, and participation in congregational psalm-singing. Without understanding and imbibing the truth spirit of Gurbani, the repetition of God's Name cannot fructify. The average mind wanders, and is full of dreams and fancies. Gurbani transforms and purifies the ideas, and helps us to understand the teachings of the Gurus. Thereby, we are led to remember God. Thus when we concentrate on Gurbani, our baser thoughts are purified and we are then blessed with heavenly sights, which produce an ecstatic feeling. A Mahatma used to refer to Gurbani as God's daughter and to Nam as God's son. Gurbani draws us close to God, and Nam unites us with Him.

To recite the prescribed daily prayers, to resort to a Gurdwara to listen to Kirtan, or God's praises, is what devout Sikhs are supposed to do. But earnest spiritual seekers must practice Nam. The Sacred Word gives us glimpses of the Kingdom of God, of Sachkhand. But though the Sacred Word gives us a vision of the peace and beauty of that realm of the spirit, it is Nam alone that can groom us to take our abode in it. Those who seek to dwell in God's realm, must seek refuge in Nam. To travel overland we require a train or a motorcar, but for an aerial journey we require an aircraft. Similarly, in life, we need the assistance of Gurbani and if we wish to soar to the realm of the spirit, we need Nam. In its contact with the world, the soul cannot remain unsullied, unless it is inspired by Gurbani. But if the soul wishes to fly Godward, it requires the wings of Nam. Initially, one must create love for Gurbani and step-by-step, one should start practicing Nam alongside it. Many an eminent Mahatma has found inspiration in Gurbani, his spiritual attainments notwithstanding.

I have been using a particular formula for reciting Gurbani and for the practice of Nam. When I find my mind wandering, I turn to Gurbani and when it rises to a sublimer spiritual state, I let it tarry there. When the mind again begins to descend, I turn to Gurbani again and strive to soar God-ward. Personally, I find this method effective. But each one must act

according to his individual nature and vary the stress on Gurbani and on Nam, as it suits his needs.

Practice of Reciting Gurbani. In the initial stages, we should recite Gurbani aloud, or else the mind will not be able to concentrate on it. And as the mind becomes anchored, we can read Gurbani in an undertone, till eventually we can read it mentally. This method was suggested to me by a Mahatma, who held the view that progress in stages helps ultimately to read Gurbani in silence, which paves the way for the practice of Nam.

The prescribed daily routine of Gurbani recitation should of course be gone through, but devotees should also progress with the Guru Granth with intelligent care. We cannot fully grasp the core of the Sacred Book without two or three careful readings, from end to end. While reading, I often make a note of particularly interesting verses in a notebook. In the Sacred Book, there is light for every spiritual stage, and it we only try, we can find useful hints suited to our individual needs. If we study the Holy Book thus, we are guided by it at each step, as if a living teacher were guiding our footsteps. I view the Sacred Book as a Guru of flesh and blood, who answers my questions and removes my doubts.

At first, I was astonished at the close inter-connection between my soul and the Sacred Book, which seemed to answer my problems at that particular time. But now I know the underlying basis. My riddles are solved for me through meditation, or Nam.

If we go on repeating a verse, its sense becomes rooted in our mind; the mind is moulded accordingly, and when it is thus moulded, it is bound to assume the corresponding form in due course. In periods of stress, I have repeated the following sacred verses, which not only comforted and soothed me, but fortified me against difficulties:

> No scorching wind can harm me,
> For I have sought refuge at God's feet
> Around me is God's bastion,
> No pain will afflict me
> I adore God, who has created me.
> His name is my complete remedy
> I dwell on Him alone.
> The protector has presserved me

All woes are at an end
Saith Nanak, His grace has descended,
And God is here to succour me.

tati vao na lagai parbrahm sarnai
chaugird hamare ram kar dukhu lagai na bhai
satgur pura bhetia jini banat banai
ram nam aukhadh dia eka liv lai - rahao
rakh lie tini rakhanhari sabh biadhi mitia
kaho Nanak kirpa bhai Prabh bhae sahai

Guru Arjan - Bilawal

6.1 Nam

Many intelligent people labour under a delusion about Nam. They do not understand the scientific truth underlying it, and in a way they are justified in their skepticism, for it is impossible to realize the potency of Nam without actually practicing it. How can we know the taste of something we have never tasted? The best way to thoroughly understand the philosophy of Nam is to practice it.

Another problem about Nam is that the initial stages are so difficult and puzzling that few people take to it, but we must bear in mind that diamonds are found in hard rocks, and pearls in the mouths of oysters, which have to be fished for in deep seas. However in the following few lines I have tried to offer certain solutions of the difficulties.

As soon as the name of any object is mentioned, its form, attributes, nature and our reaction to it rush into our minds. Name a friend and you have before your mind's eye his form, nature, and all the memories associated with him. Similarly, if we repeat God's Name, His attributes, as conceived by us, can be visualized. Through the study of Gurbani and by listening to the discourses of holy men, we form some sort of a mental picture of God. As we repeat God's Name, this picture grows clearer to us. Even if we may have no mental concept of God, by repetition of His Name, His attributes are visualized, and as we go on doing so, His attributes are slowly assimilated by us. It is a peculiar quality of our mind that if something impresses us profoundly, and

if we aspire to be shaped in the same pattern, we are gradually moulded accordingly.

In the Guru's words, "You are moulded in the form of what you adore."

jaisa sevai taisa hoe

The edifice of Nam has been raised on this natural trait of the mind. In the hottest weather, if we visualize a snowcapped mountain, and snow and ice, and concentrate on this mental vision-cold blasts of air and people shivering with cold-we shall, perhaps, begin to feel cold ourselves, or, at any rate, the intensity of the heat will diminish.

Nam and God Through repetition of God's Name, we begin to be moulded in His pattern and we begin, to assimilate His virtues. The story goes that a certain Man told a Mahatma of his yearning to find God. The Mahatma advised him to repeat God's Name. The man rejoined, "When I resort to Nam, my mind wanders."

The Mahatma asked, "What do you hold in dearest affection?"

He replied,"My milch-buffalo is my dearest possession."

The Mahatma said,"In seclusion, visualize your milch-buffalo"

The man did what he was told he closed the doors of his room and concentrated his mind on the buffalo. The man's wife complained to the Mahatma that her husband had shut himself up in his room for days together and showed no signs of emerging from it. The Mahatma went to the man's house and asked him to come out of his room. He replied, "How can I come out? I am a she-buffalo, my horns are long, and they will not allow me to come out of the room."

The Mahatma said, "You are right. Now cease to think of the she-buffalo, think of your real self, and by so doing, you will begin to think of yourself as a man."

A few days later, the man went to see the Mahatma. The Mahatma patted him on the back, and said that mental concentration was full of potentialities,"Just as you turned into a she-buffalo and back again into yourself, similarly, if you so desire, you can transform yourself into an angel, and from an angel into God."

Nam is essential, if the mind is to remain in repose. Nam is a sort of train, airplane, bridge, or ladder leading to God. It is the key that unlocks the gate of Heaven. Adoration begins with Nam, and Nam leads to perfection.

> The value of Nam transcends that of charity, meditation and austerities.
> He who meditates on God's name
> realizes all his objectives.
>
> *pun dan jap tap jete sabli upari namu*
> *Hari Hari rasna jo japai tis puran kam*

Guru Arjan - Asa.

> Dwelling on Name
> Transcends ritual deeds and formal creeds.
>
> *karam dharam anek kiria*
> *sabh upari namu acharu.*

Guru Arjan - Asa.

Diverse Interpretations of Nam In the Sacred Book, Guru Granth, the word Nam has been used in more than one sense. Nam has been used for Simran and also for the spiritual stages resulting from it. There, Nam also signifies the realization of the end as also the means adopted. Just as when we see a magnificent palace, we might remark, " How great is the power of money," similarly, the blissful condition produced by Nam is also called Nam.

Where to practice Nam Nam can be practiced at any time and anywhere, but, in the initial stages, it would be prudent to practice it in a secluded place, with a peaceful, tranquil mind. Beautiful surroundings - the banks of a river, the foot of a hill, a garden-are conductive to turning our thoughts to God. If such natural surroundings are not available, we might

resort to a special room reserved for Simnan. After some time, we shall associate the room with reverence and devotion. The room I have reserved for this purpose at my home is my sanctuary and has a special charm for me. The greatest of my difficulties and distractions cease to worry me when I enter this room. It is my place of pilgrimage, where I daily wash away the dross of my mind, and imbibe a fresh spiritual impulse.

Incense, flowers, and perfumes induce a spiritual urge and aura. When we have made sufficient progress in the realm of Simran (meditation), it is immaterial where we turn to God:

Whether I am on my feet,
Or am seated, am asleep or awake,
I think of Thee, 0 Lord.

uthat baithat sovat jagat
ehu manu tujhahi chitare

Guru Arjan - Bilawal.

The Hours for Nam The “ambrosial” period of early morning is believed to be the best time for Nam. A Mahatma suggested to me that in summer the hours between 2 a.m. and 4 a.m., and in winter, between 3 a.m. and 5 a.m. constituted the ”ambrosial period”. All these years since then, I have risen to practice Nam during those hours. One specific gain from this practice is that after this spiritual exercise we can sleep for almost two hours. After the fatigue of the spiritual exercise, two hours’ rest recuperates us and refreshes us for the day’s work. Again, during these hours there is perfect silence and calm in nature, and the attuned mind is in raptures in His Unity effortlessly, and without disturbance. This period is also called the Braham hour, or Heavenly Time. At this time, the transcendental or absolute, aspect of God predominates in us. We must try to awake at this hour, but should this not be possible, then the early morning hour and dusk are the next best.

When we have sufficiently advanced in Simran, we become accustomed to it at all hours, and no rigid schedule is necessary.

In the last stage, Simran is life, and life is Simran. A break in Simran is, as the Tenth Guru said, tantamount to the agony of dwelling near the hole of a cobra.

That good soul alone is acceptable to God
Who never forgets Him,
Sleeping and awaking,
They who never forget Him,
They alone are perfect.

kia sawna kia jagna gurmukhi te parvanu
jina sasi girasi na visrai se pure purakh pardhan

Guru Ramdas - Gauri.

Method of Simran When we have grown proficient in Simran, it is immaterial whether we perform it seated, lying down, or at work. But, in the initial stages, we would do well to practice Nam seated. In seclusion one should squat cross-legged on the floor as erect as possible, even if it is slightly inconvenient at first. To avoid fatigue, a cushion may be utilized to sit upon. The practice of Simran in a sitting posture is more conductive to concentrated devotion. When practicing Simran, we must observe the golden rule of alert concentration on God. This will be of considerable help in concentration. When the spiritual seeker has mastered the preliminary steps, he will find that when his mind descends from a higher spiritual plane, and he is again conscious of the world around and of his physical frame, he will find it easier to control his body and mind, if he is used to sitting upright. If, however, others find it inconvenient for some reasons to sit erect and upright, they may practice Simran in any posture convenient to them.

When beginning the practice of Simran, we should do well to think of Guru Nanak's ideal personality and then we might send a thought-current, pregnant with the spirit of the words, "Peace and prosperity to all." Thus, we soon attain a state of peace, poise and bliss. Whenever I utter this heartfelt prayer, I am led to believe that the current envelops the universe, imprints the kiss of affection and love on the face of creation, affectionately embraces planets, constellations, continents and countries everywhere, and then the same thought current, surcharged with love and the best of wishes, flows back into me, bringing fathomless peace and infinite joy.

Chapter 7

Simran - Its three stages

7.1 The First Stage: Audible Repetition of the Divine Name

In the initial stage, we should practise Simran by uttering the Divine Name aloud. But if this fails to result in mental concentration, we might resort to the beads of the rosary. Subdued utterance of the Divine Name and listening to its sound helps us to concentrate.

At first, the mind does wander and concentration is difficult to attain. In this tug-of-war, irrelevant thoughts are bound to recur, but one need not despair:

> There is no escape except through Simran.
> *bin Har bhajan nahi chhutkara*

Guru Arjan - Gauri.

> This human life is the time to realize God.
> *Gobind milan ki eih teri baria*

Guru Arjan - Asa.

Mottoes such as these, contained in Gurbani, must inspire and guide us. We may select any of God's Names according to our creed or faith, or in conformity with the guidance of our preceptor, because all Names are sacred.

> I am a sacrifice unto all Thy Names.
> *balihari jao jete tere nav hai*

Guru Nanak - Basant.

The First Cause, the Merciful or Karim,
Rahim, or Merciful God, sustains all,
Allah, is unknowable and transcendent
Khuda, is Self-existent and Infinite.
The Divine Lord, the Creator,
Pervades all His creation,
He is Jagan Nath, the Sustainer of creation,
He is Madho, the Remover of Fear.
Remember Him in thy innermost heart,
He is Rikhikesh, Gopal, Gobind.
He is the Gracious, Unique Maula,
The Pir, the Prophet, the Shaikh,
He is Narain, Nar Hari, Dayal (Merciful)
Vasudeva, dwelling everywhere,
His play is inscrutable
O Thou, the First Cause of all things,
Be merciful to me,
Grant me the gift of devotion, O Thou Maker mine,
Saith Nanak, the Guru has removed all my illusions,
Allah and Parbrahm (Transcendent Brahm)
Are the same God.

kaaran kanan Karim sarab pratipal Rahim
Allah alakh apar khudi khudai vad beshumar
unmo bhagwant gusai khalaku ravi rahia sarab thai
Jagan Nath jag jiwan Madho bhao bhanjan rid mahi aradho
Rikhikes, Gopal, Gobind puran sarbatr Mukand
meharvan maula tuhi ek pir paikadbar sekh
dila ka malaku kare haku Kuran Kateb te paku
Narain, Narhar daidl ramat ram ghat ghat adhar
Basudev basat sabh thai lila kichhu lakhi na jai
mehar daiya kar karnaihar
bhagati bandgi aehi sirjanhar
kahu Nanak guri khoe bharam eko Allahu Parbrahm.

Guru Arjan - Ramkali.

Personally, however, I use the Word, “Wahiguru” for Simran and recommend it to fellow Sikhs. In my opinion, all other names, such as Ram, Om,

Allah, Gobind, Madho, and others symbolize a particular attribute of God and when a spiritual seeker glows conscious both of the immanence and transcendence of God, he would not like to call God by a name that is indicative of only one attribute. It would be like referring to the ocean as a "cup" or a "bowl!" It would diminish the area of one who is meditating on the All-Encompassing and All-Pervasive.

When a spiritual seeker attains to a sublime spiritual stature and finds within his soul the Eternal Refulgent Light, he involuntarily exclaims ecstatically through every pore of his being," Wah, Wah: Wonderful, Wonderful!" It is a wondrous, ecstatic state and one perceives the full significance of the mystic word, "Waheguru - Wondrous God"! There is no other conceivable word that can equally comprehensively describe the great mystery and wonder that is God.

The term "Guru" connotes all the immanent and transcendental attributes of God and much else besides. This is why I uphold and advocate the use of the word Waheguru. The word "Guru" in Sikh ideology means both a spiritual guide and God.

The great poet-author of Suraj Parkash Bh. Santokh Singh and many other old writers, in their lucid and beautiful comments, expound the meaning of the word "Wahiguru." Bhai Gurdas says that Guru Nanak himself originally coined the word for God.

> Guru Nanak pronounced the true mystic implication
> of the word *Waheguru.*
>
> *Waheguru sach mantar sunaia*

Var - Pauri 3.

Bhai Gurdas adds that the word Waheguru is for Simran the supreme epithet.

> The mystic word Waheguru brings about the end of self's ascendancy
>
> *Wahiguru gur mantar hai jap haumai koi*

Var 13 - Pauri 20.

The Primordial Being Who was in the beginning,
Who will be at the end,
He alone is my spiritual guide
My homage to Him alone
Who regulates the entire creation.

adi ant ekai avtara
soi gura samjahu hamara
namaskar tis ki h ao hamari
sagal praja jin ap sawari

Guru Gobind Singh - Chaupai.

My True Guru lives for ever and ever,
He neither takes birth, nor does He die,
He is the deathless Master,
He pervades all things.

Satiguru mera sada sada
na avai na jai
oh abnashi purkhu hai
sabh mahi rahia samai.

Guru Ramdas - Suhi

7.1.1 Guru's Image

In the preliminary stages, many seekers of Truth, while resorting to the Simran of "Waheguru," fix their mind on Guru Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh or some incarnation or other, but they have to face a great difficulty in the final stages. I myself used to have a picture of Guru Nanak before my eyes when I began Simran. At first, this device proved very useful in promoting concentration. As I progressed, I visualized that the picture scintillated with sparks of light and glowed with life - as if Guru Nanak was present in the flesh. Then my joy knew no bounds. Whenever I so chose, I could, as it were, have a glimpse of the Guru. I felt as if the image of the Guru dwelt in my heart, and when 1 chose, I closed my eyes, and I could visualize the Guru within. Once I expressed it thus poetically:

Perfect Master as I utter thy name, I see thy likeness before my eyes

I close my eyes and behold thee in my heart
I have lost all interest in other joys, since I have known this one,
But I wonder and fail to understand
How the Kindly Master like thee
condescends to bless the narrow recesses of my heart.

pare gurdev tera laindia hi nam
ik akhian de age tasvir khichi janvdi
mit lavan akhian ke kite nazar lag jave
akhian ton lahike dile vich ja samanvandi
bhulian ne khedan sanu jadon di eh khed labhi
par han hairan ik samajh nahi anvdi
tere jahe guru beparvah shahanshah tain
mere dil jahi tang jaga kinven bhanvdi

When this state develops further, it becomes hard to contemplate God in His transcendence, while in fact the realization of His transcendence and our union with Him are the crown and climax, the apex and zenith of spiritual growth. When I wished to concentrate on the formless one, there arose before my eyes the image of the Guru. At last, with a mighty effort, greater than that with which I had formed the habit of picturing to myself the Guru. I undid and broke this habit. It is, therefore, essential to reflect on the Formless God from the very outset, else difficulties arise in the closing stages. The concentration and meditation should therefore be only on the Guru's "Sabad" (word- Waheguru) and the seeker should continue to dwell on His Name by the process of meditation and listening to the same. Judicious Mahatmas commend this very course that I suggest.

7.2 The Second Stage

7.2.1 Mental Simran

Repetition of the Name at times, leads to automatic mental Simran: the lips cease to move, and yet mental Simran progresses. This induces mental peace and joy. As we grow spiritually, mental Simran will always, or whenever we so choose, progress unceasingly. The physical aspect of Simran ends, and mental repetition continues from day to day. The external attractions and distractions begin to drop, while mental harmony with Him begins. All the powers of the mind, which were diffused in external objects, begin to be concentrated, through the sweet, soft, mental Simran. The seeker of God

perceives a flood of mental peace coursing through his whole being; the mind is at rest, the lips are motionless, and yet mental Simran continues!

Those who are regular in the recitation of Gurbani, especially as a mental process, taste this joy now and then. But it is far more useful and more methodical, to get to the stage of mental Simran through the repetition of Nam. It facilitates the progress to higher stages. I have seen some advanced souls deeply perplexed in this process - they could recite Gurbani mentally, but when they began Nam, Simran, they could not continue it for long.

7.2.2 The Practice of Nam with our Every Breath

At this stage, if we accustom ourselves to the practice of Simran with our every breath, it brings much joy. As we inhale, we might mentally utter "Wah", and "Guru" when we exhale. The lips do not move. This is also mental Simran, and we practice Nam with our every breath. This is the second stage of Simran.

7.3 The Third Stage

7.3.1 Signs

The Third stage of Nam is marvellous. Mental Simran promotes concentration, and the gentle sound that mental Simran creates within our being becomes more audible. The sounds of the external world are drowned in the sound of mental Simran within. We hear nothing but the music of Simran within. The music is pitched in such a high key that even while travelling in a railway train, moving at full speed, to the man practicing mental Simran, the rattle of the wheels is inaudible.

7.4 The State of Sahej

The spiritual stage gradually continues to advance to such an extent that we consider even the recitation of mental Simran as superfluous. Then the physical process of Simran ceases, but the mind is in union with God, in a state of poise. Now, both the physical and mental stress of Simran cease, and the mind is perfectly at rest. This is called the *Sahej* stage, whose peace and bliss defy description. Then one feels:

Those who have not practiced Nam
Are leading a useless, insipid life.

jini aisa Hari nam na chetio
se kahe jag ae ram raje

Guru Ramdas - Asa.

The ambrosial joy of Nam is experienced at this stage. The mind is in a state of inebriation and is full of unfathomable bliss, and the joys of the world stand no comparison to it and pale into insignificance. We feel as if we have found a rare treasure. When we descend from this state, mental Simran begins and, through it again, we ascend to this stage of peace, poise, and joy.

7.4.1 My First Illusion

When I first felt this stage of effortless union with God, I thought that though my bliss was infinite, yet Simran was seemingly wanting, and so 1 fancied that without Simran God-worship was meaningless. At first, I imagined that God-worship consisted in repeating the Divine Name only; then I conceived that mental Simran was God-worship: now I felt as if Simran had ceased altogether and, therefore, I felt that the repose of the mind in peace and poise, without Simran, was not God-worship and was, I thought, a mere waste of time. For years, I laboured under this delusion.

I consulted some Mahatmas, one of whom was the late Sant Attar Singh Ji. The Sant said, "My dear boy, this spiritual state of yours is superior to your previous stages the very object of Simran is to attain this state of poise and peace."

Later, I met Dr. Chanan Singh of Jagraon, who himself was a devotee. He escorted me to the late Sant Nand Singh Ji of Kaleran (Ludhiana District), who said, "In the first stages there is Simran with the lips, followed by mental Simran. This is followed by the mind resting in a state of poise and peace." He added, "When somebody is performing Simran with the lips, followed by mental Simran, he stands apart from God and adores God, but when he draws nearer to God, Simran begins to drop and there emerges a state of being-at-one and one drinks of the heavenly nectar."

He paused awhile, and said, “Take two pieces of iron. When the two pieces are welded, they become one whole. So is Simran the welding, the joining link that unites the soul with the Infinite Soul.”

I inquired: “Since the mind does not continuously dwell in the state of Sahej, how can we permanently retain it in this state?”

He replied: “Let the mind remain in the state of Sahej, so long as it will stay there. When it descends, take to Simran and through Simnan, it could regain the same ideal state of bliss. In the course of time, the mind will ever abide in the state of ceaseless mental peace and bliss.”

7.4.2 Second Illusion

The devotee labours under another illusion. In this spiritual state, he falls into the state of Sukh Nindra, or the "Sleep of Ease," which the yogis call the sleep of Tandra. In this stage we live as in a sweet, dreamless sleep, when all thought is absent. But the devotee must beware of this sleep and remain poised in the state of Sahej. This sleep of ease blocks the way to further spiritual progress, and labouring under a delusion, we fancy that it is the culminating stage of spiritual advancement. I strayed in this state for long. My inner voice said that this was not the final stage, and the journey ahead was yet long, but I could not see the way ahead. Whenever I tried to concentrate, the Sleep of Ease overpowered me. At last, I chanced upon a book, in English, A Visit to a Gyani, by Edward Carpenter, at an auctioneer’s shop, a study of which resolved my long-standing doubts and my spiritual progress was accelerated:

Carpenter says,

> Then when success seems to be coming and thought is dwindling, oblivion; the twin foe appears and must also be conquered. For if thought merely gives place to sleep, what is there gained? After months but more probably years of intermittent practice, the power of control grows curious but distinct psychological changes take place. One day the student finds that Thought has gone, he stands for a moment in oblivion, then that veil lifts and there streams through his being a vast and illumined consciousness glorious, that fills and overflows him, surrounding him so that, he is like a pot in water which has the liquid within and without. In this consciousness there is divine knowledge but no Thought.

Apropos this point, the Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram at Pondicherry wrote:

> Generally when you have what you call dreamless sleep, it is one of two things, either you do not remember what you dream or you fall into absolute unconsciousness which is almost death-a taste of death. But there is the possibility of a sleep in which you enter into an absolute silence, immobility and peace in all parts of your being and your consciousness merges into Sach-chid-ananda. You can hardly call it sleep, for it is extremely conscious. In that condition even if you remain for a few minutes, these few minutes give you more rest and refreshment than hours of ordinary sleep. You can not have it by chance, it requires a long training.

The spiritual pilgrim loves to revert to, and stay in, this state of Sahej repeatedly. But keeping in view our worldly duties and obligations, we must not aim at an excess of it, even if we could, so long as the discharge of our manifold duties in the world continues to claim our time arid attention. We must not be too greedy even in God-worship, nor must we be impatient. We must devoutly, gratefully, watch and wait patiently for God's grace. We are not blessed with the state of Sahej too soon, or too often, at the very outset. Years passed after my first experience of this ecstatic state, and I waited and waited to experience it again. I felt as if the first experience had been a mere dream. After some years, I began to be blessed again with it, and in quick succession.

Once when I inquired of a Namdhari Mahatma about this mystic state, he naively said, "It is my mystery, too. At times, He hears us, even if we hail Him but a few times, and we are blessed with this state. And there are times when we tire of hailing Him, yet He hears not, as if His ears were plugged with cotton-wool!"

Of course, by "hailing" he meant Simran.

7.4.3 The Fruit of Sahej

In this blessed state, the seeker feels as if he has received an electric current within him-waves of ecstasy surge through him. A wondrous thrill permeates his being; there is boundless, overflowing joy; he is steeped in an ocean of bliss; he feels inebriated with brimming bliss. When he turns his mind to his

ears he hears sweet melodies emanating from the universe; in the cortex of the brain there is the musical melodious tinkle of bells, and celestial symphony.

When the seeker's mind turns to his nose, sweet, enthralling perfumes greet his nostrils, and when his eyes open, he sees Divine Force pervading all things and feels that the Divine Force makes all living things dance to His tune. And when his eyes close, he perceives the same Force permeating His being. He finds himself indissolubly connected and interlinked with the universe, like beads strung together. This state of Sahej brings Divine Knowledge, which I shall refer to in the chapter on "Gyan, or Divine Knowledge."

7.5 Centres of Consciousness

In this state, the seeker perceives within himself many centres where consciousness could rest in a state of concentration, and when his mind is diverted to such centres, he feels unfathomable joy. As compared with this supreme bliss, the pleasures of the world are naught. The love and union of man and woman is supposed to be delightful, but, the seeker finds in Sahej that indescribable, unfathomable, bliss that defies description. The bliss of Sahej infinitely excels the pleasures of the flesh in intensity and in its peculiar nature, and unlike the aftereffects of coitus-weakness, depression, and inertia-those of Sahej are exhilarating, invigorating and health-giving. The mind is buoyant.

At the initial stage, we do not understand these things, and even when we are at Simran, we yearn for worldly pleasure. Imperceptibly, gradually, we compare the pleasures of the world with those of the spirit, and inevitably, we are driven to the inescapable conclusion that the greatest pleasures of the senses stand absolutely no comparison with the supreme bliss of the spirit, the bliss of Nam. Indeed, we discard the pleasures of the world, only when we taste of the bliss of Nam, and in comparison find the pleasures of the flesh dull and drab. When we find the Supreme Bliss of Simran, we experience a sense of satisfaction and the mind is at rest. We cease to crave for worldly pleasures, for in the supreme bliss of Simran are concentrated all conceivable pleasures, and much more besides.

When we taste spiritual bliss,
The pleasures of the flesh repel us.

oh rasu ava ihu ras nahibhava

Kabir - Gauri Bawan Akhri.

The man of Simran alone can fully grasp the great truth of above quotation. Those who merely read it, but do no its truth cannot fully comprehend it. Only those who have tasted spiritual bliss are aware of the inner and deeper of the words.

7.6 Daswan Duar, or Tenth Gate

There are six centres in the body where consciousness is concentrated; a little below the navel, the navel, the heart, the neck, midway between the nose and the eyes, and the cortex of the brain. When consciousness is focused in the cortex of the brain, bliss is unbounded and the mind feels the intoxication of joy. The Gurus call it Daswan Duar, or Tenth Gate. Impatience to reach this marvellous centre is not desirable. Only the ideal seeker can aspire to reach this centre. When we reach this centre, we derive infinite delight, and are averse to returning to our normal waking condition. We enter into Samadhi, or trance, and some Mahatmas shed their mortal frame while in this stage. Those who attain this stage are not much interested in worldly affairs. Descending from this state, I feel like a stranger, and perceive that humanity in general is on the wrong track. In this mood of frustration, I have to remind myself of attractions and fascinations of the world to work up any interest to re-enter it.

A Mahatma used to remark, "Householders must not indulge in an excess of Samadhi, for it tends to create too much detachment from worldly affairs and one feels disinclined to throw one's whole heart into the affairs of the world. One continues to yearn for the Sahej state, as one yearns for the joys of kingship which one has enjoyed in a happy dream!"

When we attain the Sahej state, our desire to live in the flesh diminishes, and the desire to merge into Truth intensifies. Therefore, the seekers should attempt to enjoy this state of Samadhi only when they have discharged their responsibilities of service to humanity in their missionary work. (The Gurus hold that we must continue to serve humanity with our whole heart, even while steeped in the blissful state of Sahej).

The Gurus speak of Sahej repeatedly:

In a God-centred being, there is the state of Sahej,
The mind rests at the Tenth Centre,
There is no drowsiness, nor appetite
There, God's Name is the nectar.

gurmukh antar sahaj hai manu charhia daswai akasi
tithai ugh na bhukh hai Hari amrit nami sukh vas

Guru Amardas - Saloka.

And there is peace and bliss.
There is sweet, unstruck music,
In this mortal frame,
there is a rain of melody.

jhunatkar ankad ghanghoran
trikuti bhitar ati chhabi joran

Paintees Akhri.

There is perfect music,
Unstruck music and ecstatic joy,
It is a wondrous state,
Only rare souls attain it
There is no wavering, no wandering
By His Grace alone, is this state attained.

panch sabad tah puran nad
anhad baje achraj bismad
birle pavahi oh bisram
digi na dolai katahu dhavai
gurprasad ko eku mahalu pavai

Guru Arjan - Ramkali

In Sahej, there is neither day nor night,
There is God alone-none but He.

dinsu rain bed nahi sastra
taha basai Nirankar

Kabir - Asa.

Mental concentration in centres besides the Tenth Centre, or the cortex of the brain, also create an ecstatic state. In the preliminary stages, we would do well to practise mental concentration in lower centres. As we progress and attain a greater measure of self-control, we could advance towards the higher centres.

Though Mahatmas, or advanced pilgrims, are but few and far between, and even those few prefer to remain obscure and unknown, yet if we are lucky enough to have the inspiration and guidance of such souls, it proves highly useful. Each one of us has his own peculiar difficulties, and so a well-informed guide expedites our progress.

It is a pity that although there are enough Sikh colleges and schools for secular education to spare, there is not a single Sikh institution for the guidance of spiritual seekers. For want of appropriate assistance in Simran, many aspirants to spiritual advancement, such as myself, have to wait for years before we can progress from one stage to another.

Here I might add one more point before I end this chapter. While we are engaged in Simran, there are, at times, low and gentle tapping sounds in the brain. They must not frighten us, because they are signs of our progress on the spiritual plane. In fact, with more experience, these taps prove to be sources of great joy. After every tap, there rises a wave of mental peace; the nerves and brain cells thus assume their natural poise. When for the first time the late Sant Gurbakhsh Singh Ji, of Jabbowal (Amritsar), told me of this phenomenon, I was unable to make any comment. But when I had this experience myself and enjoyed it immensely, I recollected what he had said. He was a high-souled Mahatma and was leading a life of Simran and missionary work. I met him for the first time when I had just appeared for the B.A. examinations. He remarked, "Do not worry about examination results. You will get through. Go on with your Simran, and some day you will taste of its sweet fruit."

After passing the examination and with his advice regarding the practice of Simran, I felt much encouraged and derived much spiritual good. He was, perhaps, the first saint with whom I had come into contact and heard a discourse on Nam Simran.

Chapter 8

GYAN: Divine Knowledge

Humans are but beasts
Without knowledge divine.
The God-centred, with grace divine,
Are blessed with divine insight.

avan ae sristi mahi binu bujhe pasu dhor
Nanak, gurmukhi so bujhai
ja kai bhag mathor

Guru Arjan - Gauri Bawan Akhri.

Divine knowledge is an ornament
Of transcendental worth;
It beautifies those who
Are devoted to Him
As is a devoted wife to her spouse.

gian apar sigaru hai sobhavanti nari

Guru Amardas - Asa.

All vegetations flower forth
To bring us the treasured fruit
Flowers die when fruits are born.
For knowledge of the Heavenly Father,
There are virtuous deeds, meditation deep
But deeds do die
When God is known.

phal karan phuli banrai
phal laga tab phul bilai
gianai karan karam abhias
gianu bhaia tab karmah nasu

Ravidas - Bhairo

In the third stage of Simran, of which I have spoken in the chapter under that title, divine knowledge in the real sense is born. I regard the intuitive divine knowledge thus gained in that state as true divine knowledge. To imagine that divine knowledge can be imbibed through the study of sacred books only, is a fallacy. Just as science is learnt through books and teachers, but its theories can be fully grasped only when they have been practically tested in a laboratory, so divine knowledge cannot be fully and convincingly realized, unless we have tested the truths of the Word in that blessed spiritual state through Simran, when thought is extinct and we perceive things intuitively and clearly. Knowledge can be assimilated only when we know how to apply it in our daily life.

Vain words and vapoury speech
Are not marks of divine knowledge
Books on Gyan tell us that
He alone is a true Gyani
Whose faith in God is him as a rock
Such a one is beyond all praise.

gaga giano nahi much batau
anik jugati sastra kari bhatau
giani soi jakai drirh sou
kahot sunat kachhu jogu na hou

Guru Arjan - Gauri Bawan Akhri.

Deep meditation and knowledge are
Vain if there is no Nam.
nam bina kia gian dhianu

Guru Nanak - Ramkali.

No theory can be accepted as true and authoritive, so long as its truth has not been tested and demonstrated in the smallest detail.

jau na dekhau apuni naini
tao na patijau gur ki baini

I agree that spiritual truths cannot be readily grasped, for they arc so subtle. But I believe that like the principles and truths of physics spiritual truths are also abiding. They can be practiced and tested, and are as reliable and applicable as the laws of electricity, or the laws of gravitation. But this does not mean that unless and until spiritual truths have been fully tested, they should be treated as myths. I am innocent of astronomy, but having found the forecasts about solar and lunar eclipses and about the movement of other planets and stars true, I accept the possibility of the accuracy of astronomical predictions. Even when I did not understand spiritual theories, I still revered religious leaders, gurus, and Mahatmas.

The main secret of my research has been this I have had full and firm faith in the Word of Guru Nanak. Where I did not fully understand, I prayed for light, and waited for an answer to my prayer. Even when I did not grasp a spiritual truth, I did not give up my research, nor was my patience exhausted. For spiritual and religious researchers, this spirit is essential. On this path, we must walk with eyes open, but our attitude must be reverent and humble. In spiritual research, the reverence of the East and the intellectual freedom of the West must go hand in hand. When walking towards God, if we hold high our head in haughtiness, we stumble at every step. Humility lights the path like a beacon, whose light saves us from falling and stumbling.

Divine Knowledge is like sugar scattered on sand;
The elephant cannot pick up the grains of sugar,
But the ant picks them up and eats them!
Give up thy pride of birth and caste,
Be thou humble like the ant.

Hari bhaio khand retu mahi bikhrio
hasti chunio na jai
kahi Kabir kul jati pati taji
chiti hoi chuni khai

Kabir - Ramkali.

8.1 First Stage of Gyan

In the third stage of Simran, the mind sheds all thought, discards all conceptions. All notions, all prejudices, all encumbrances, and becomes as light as a flower. In this state, the mind is like a lake whose waters are clear and calm, unstirred and undisturbed by waves of storms. The spiritual aspirant at this stage discovers that the treasure he seeks lies within his being. He ceases to wander aimlessly.

They who seek the treasure of Heaven's Kingdom
Must seek within and not without;
They who seek without and not within
Are unattuned, the witless fools

vinu kaia ji horthai dhanu khojde se murh betale

Guru Ramdas - Gauri Var.

How foolish of me the treasure is within;
Why do I seek without?

man meria antari tere nidhan hai
bahar vast na bhal

Guru Amardas - Wadhans.

All within, naught without,
Indeed a fool, who seeks without.

sabh kichh ghar mahi bahar nahi
bahar tole so bharam bhulahi

Guru Ramdas - Majh.

In quest of pleasure and happiness, we go astray, till we discover the right path leading to mental peace and bliss in the state of Sahaj, there arise within us waves of bliss. The aspirant intoxicated with bliss, becomes aware that the ecstatic joy he experiences cannot be derived from the pleasures of the world. He feels convinced that he has found the right path.

The mind's quest for pleasure in external things ends, and the quest within begins. This is the first stage in the realm of spiritual advance. The concentrated mind becomes introspective. At first, although the aspirant cannot comprehend what is going on within his being, he feels the ecstasy of bliss. Tic can be compared to the traveller in a sandy desert, dying of thirst, who all of a sudden chances upon a bubbling stream of fresh water, and whose whole mind is centred in quenching his thirst. He does not bother about the source of the water and where it empties itself. As the cool, sweet draughts of water refresh his parched throat, his heart rejoices, and his face is suffused with the light of joy.

Similarly, the spiritual aspirant enjoys the bubbling streams and waves of joy from within himself, and bursts with exuberant bliss. This bliss is overwhelming. He feels convinced that his quest without for pleasure was entirely misplaced and that the fountainhead of Truth lies within himself, which he has explored and can utilize when he wills.

8.2 Second Stage of Gyan

Then the spiritual aspirant finds that he is not merely a body, but the dweller in a body. He realizes his mistake in thinking hitherto that he was merely a body. His daily communion with God through Simran convinces him of the named reality that by shedding his cravings and feelings, and prejudices - by the control of all thought he is decidedly something subtle and superb dwelling within a body, calm and serene. He then feels sure that the body and his self are two distinct entities, and that all his limbs move and act as he bids the body is a mechanism that is at his command. He comes to realize that, just as the pressing of the clutch disconnects the car's engine and the wheels, so when the "clutch" of thought is pressed, it disconnects him from his body. At this revelation the spiritual aspirant sheds his blind attachment to, and infatuation for, his body. He realizes that the body is his, but he is not just the body.

When the seeker's communion with God advances still further, he perceives that man and bird and beast, are, one and all, like himself dwellers in bodies, which are houses for souls. In all frames, souls abide, as does his soul in his body.

Thenceforth he does not view his children, wife and other beings as mere bodies but as souls as mobile houses of flesh and blood. The scales fall from

his eyes, and all around him he finds an assemblage of souls!

8.3 Third Stage of Gyan

The spiritual aspirant next experiences a subtle, all-pervading Force, which surges through him, as in all things, and he feels that he is a mere speck, a drop in the vast ocean of this Force.

When we advance in communion with the Infinite, we begin to perceive that this Force pervades not only living things, but all things - trees, hills and mountains, houses, in fact all matter. All things appear to be concentrated forms of this infinite Force. When this vision dawned on me, I was full of wonder. Whichever object I thought of, stood before me in its subtle form. A brick would appear before me as large as a couch, and I could see that it was composed of atoms of ether. I saw the same Force permeating the brick, as it permeated the universe. Each particle, I perceived was composed of atoms of ether. As I thought of the hill, it would appear sky-high in a subtle form, first of smoke and then it appeared to be made of the same Force.

At first I was diffident about speaking of my realization to others, for fear of inviting their derision. But, my conviction was deep-seated and in the words of the Guru, I felt:

> He pervades land and water,
> He pervades the nether regions,
> He pervades the forests.

Thrilled by my discovery, I would go into ecstasies. I had perceived It all with the eyes of intuition there were no external proofs, for, when touched, stones, trees, tables, chairs would be hard and gross and for a long time I prayerfully sought an explanation for this mystery. By chance, I lighted upon an article entitled *Reality and Appearance*, by Sir Oliver Lodge, which was very helpful. Sir Oliver Lodge says:

> Philosophers have always sought Reality and striven to dive down into Appearance. in the search for it, and would not be very much surprised if they found it very different from what it superficially looks like ... Thus it was found that the atoms were not separate individual entities, having no common properties, or family

> relationship but that they were members of a family and were built up of some ingredients in fixed proportion, so that the fundamental constituent of the physical world was not the atom as had been thought but was the unit of electric charge. Thus arose the electric theory of matter absolutely contrary to all superficial appearance. We learnt that all the atoms were related to each other, they were all composed of the same thing, namely positive and negative electricity and that the difference between the chemical atoms could be explained by the number and pattern in which these two elements were mingled. Thus the whole complexity of external nature, the landscapes and everything that could be observed, including our own bodies, were due to the grouping and arrangement of immense numbers of two fundamental entities known as the proton and electron .A revolutionary change, this is of utmost significance, a kind of reality, not the least suggested by appearance of things and yet undoubtedly true of the whole material world.

I found from a study of this article that the original scientific theory that all matter was composed of atoms had undergone a tremendous development and that scientists had discovered that atoms were made of numberless protons and electrons, which were subtle wavelets of electricity. Electrons were again subdivided into neutrons. Thus all matter, the entire universe was made of electricity or a still finer Force. And so the universe was made of Force! This confirmed my intuitive experience and the truth of the following verses of Gurbani dawned upon me in a new light:

He is the Enjoyer, He the Juice,
He is the Bride. He the Bridegroom
My Glorious. Refulgent Lord pervades all.
He is the Fisherman, He the Fish
He is the Water. He the Net.
He the bird - trap. He the Red-bird.
He assumes all glorious forms, my friend,
He lives forever and ever.
Saith Nanak, Thou art the lake,
Thou art the Lotus. Thou art the Poet.
Thine splendour that suffuses all.

ape rasia ape rasu ape ravanharu
ape hovai cholrha ape seju bhataru

rangi rata mera sahiba ravi rahia bharpuri (1-rahao)
ape machchi machhui ape pani jalu
ape jal manakarha ape andari lal
ape bahubidhi rangla sakhie mera lal
nit ravai sohagani dekh hamarai hal
pranvai Nanak benti tu sarvaru tu hans
kaulu tu hai kavia tu hai ape vekh vigasa

Guru Nanak - Sri Rag.

The spiritual pilgrim m finds that he himself is but a speck in the great ocean and all animate objects hills, mountains and all are specks in the boundless ocean this subtle Force, and that the working of the universe, this drama of creation is entirely dependent on this Force. There is nowhere this Force is not. In fire, water, air, space, everywhere, this subtle Force lives and works and man is eternally related to this Force.

He pervades all things, look where you may
He dwells in all, rare the souls who know it
He dwells in water, in land, in the nether regions
He pervades the elephant and the ant
He was, is, and ever shall be;
By His Grace, I know the secret.
God pervades all, it is all His play.
Govind is the treasure-house of virtues,
Remember the Omniscient Master, Saith Nanak, God is All-pervading.

jahi dekhau tah sangi eko ravi rahia
ghat ghat vasi api virlai kinai lahia
jali thali mahiali puri puran kit hasati samania
adi ante madhi soi gurprasadi jania

Guru Arjan - Asa.

One in communion with God finds Force manifest in animate as well as inanimate objects, radiant everywhere, and it lights up his mind:

His the light in all
He is Light of all lights
His the Light which kindles all

By the Grace of Guru, our mind is enlightened.

sabh mahi joti joti hai soi
tisdoi chanani sabh mahi chanan hoi
gur sakhi joti pargat hoi.

Guru Nanak - Dhanasri.

Blessed, thrice blessed are they
Who serve the perfect Master,
Suffused with Light, their minds are illumined.

gur pura bhetio vod bhagi
manahii bhaia pargasa

Guru Arjan - Sorath.

8.4 Fourth Stage of Gyan

The aspirant receives hints such as the following from Gurbani for further guidance:

As fragrance abides in flowers,
As is reflection in the mirror,
So does God abide within
Seek Him, seek Him within, my brother
Within and without, it is He alone
This the Teacher has said to me
Know thyself, know thyself,
Then will the dross of illusion fade, saith Nanak.

puhap madhi jio bas basat hai
mukar mahi jaise chhai
taise hi Hari basai nirantari
ghat hi khojahu bhai
bahar bhitari eko janahu
ih guri gianu batai
jan Nanak bin apa chinai
mitai na bharam ki kai

Guru Tegh Bahadur - Dhanasri.

Thou art thee image of God, my soul
Know thy fountainhead, my soul.
God is with thee, my soul
Enjoy thy bliss by heeding the Gurus Word
By knowing thyself, thou wilt know the Lord
Then wilt thou know tile secret of life and death.

man tu joti sarupu hai apana mul pachhani
man Hari ji terai nail har rang gurmati rang manu
mul pachhanahi tan saho janahi
maran jiwan ki sojhi hoi.

Guru Amardas - Asa.

The Truth-seeker then changes the course of his research. He focuses his whole attention on himself, and takes to knowing, discovering himself. This is the second turning point in his search of Truth. In the first stage of Gyan he discards the quest for Truth without, and turns the searchlight within. He is surcharged with the inspiration. “The treasure is within look not for it without.” In the fourth stage, the spiritual seeker begins to understand and know his innermost self. For a while, the understanding is incomplete. But when he examines things closely and intently, he realizes that his self, which appeared to him at first sight insignificant as a drop in the ocean, is truly a wondrous thing. He finds on a small-scale all the attributes of the All-Pervading Power in his own self. He is convinced that just as a drop of water and the ocean are one in nature and substance, so his self and the All-pervading Power of the universe are fundamentally alike and identical in nature.

“The drop doth dwell in the ocean,
The ocean dwells in the drop.”

Then the aspirant begins to perceive that whenever he so chooses, he can see the whole universe in its subtle form within himself. What he sees without in the material universe, he can observe within himself, when he so desires.

“He who dwells in the universe
Dwells within us too.”

He sees the sun, the stars, the heavens, earth, the whole universe within himself with the mind's eye. As in a dark night, when the air is still, the reflection of the stars in a tank, or a lake, appears as if there were before us two starry heavens, one overhead, and the other under our feet. So the reflection of the whole universe is cast on a still, reposeful mind, and lo, there appear two worlds; the one we see on opening our eyes, and the other when we close them.

As we progress, we perceive that the whole universe exists within our mind, and that all creation is but an image of our inner self, a picture of our own thoughts. There comes a revolutionary change over us. Our angle of vision changes, and our conception of the universe undergoes a reversal. Whereas, formerly, we looked upon the visible universe as something real and true, that is to say, while we were unconscious of our inner self- now we find the universe in our mind as real and true, but the world without appears to be but a reflection of the inner self. The conclusion that the world has no existence in itself startles the intellect and raises doubts in our mind for a while. Our habits of thinking, our eyes, and our intellects are convinced that the world does exist and that its existence is a reality. But when we are in communion with God, we conceive it to be a subjective phenomenon, a mere shadow, an illusion, a mirage, a delusion!

The man of inner vision is puzzled and cannot grasp this comedy of errors. In spite of his inner conviction, the evidence of the sense does not support his inner conception. Here again, Gurbani comes to his succour. At a number of places, Gurbani dubs this world a dream, a myth, a phenomenon, something illusory.

> The world is a mountain of smoke,
> How do you believe it to be a reality?
>
> *eho jag dhue ka pahar*
> *tai sacha mania keh bichar*

Guru Tegh Bahadur - Basant.

> Mother, this maya is a mirage,
> It is like a fire of straw,
> Like the shadow of a cloud it is
> Without meditation on Him,

It is like the waters of a flood.

mai maya chhai
trin ki agan megh ki chaya
Gobind bhajan bin har ka jal

Guru Arjan - Todi.

Drive away thy delusion,
The world is but a dream,
It deluded angels and gods and goddesses,
It deluded human beings,
It deluded the god Brahma, yogis, and ascetics.
It deluded and frightened mortals.
This ocean of Maya is frightful
The God-centred drive away illusion,
They banish fear and infatuation,
Such as they attain to supreme Bliss.

bhabha bharam mitavoh apna
ia sansar sagal hai supna
bharme sur nar devi deva
bharma sidh sadhik Brahameva
bharam bharam manukh dahkae
dutar maha bikham eh mae
gurmukh bharam bhai moh mitaia
Nanak teh param sukh paia

Guru Arjan - Gauri.

Take this world as but a dream,
God alone is true, nothing else is.

jio supna ar pekhna aise jag kau jan
in mai kachh sacho nahi Nanak bin Bhagwan

Guru Tegh Bahadur - Saloka.

My friend, the world is an illusion
It is like a wall of sand
And lasts not long.

jag rachna sabh jhuth hai
jan leho re mit
kahi Nanak thir na rahai
jio balu ki bhit

Guru Tegh Babadur - Saloka.

When I was in this state, my prayers proved fruitful, and I saw the light of understanding. Providence put certain books within my reach, and my doubts were removed. I am no doubt still deluded into thinking that the world is an abiding Reality; and yet in a state of Communion, this delusion evaporates into thin air. Not that the delusion vanishes entirely, but my convictions about its transitory nature are clear.

Those who wish to know more on this subject, would do well to read The Elements of Metaphysies, by the German Philosopher, Paul Deussen. Deussen endorses in this book the researches of Kant and Schopenhauer, both German philosophers, and proves conclusively that the visible world is the creation of our intellect, and begins and ends with our intellect. It has no independent existence of its own. Briefly put, it is like this,

> All that belongs to the phenomenal world lie in bounds of space, time, causality (forms of our intellect only); the thing in itself (God) is on the other hand free from these intellectual forms, (space, time, causality) in which the world is built.
> If I look outward, I see everything through the medium of space, time, causality. If I look within, I perceive that which exists independently of these intellectual forms the thing in itself (God), beyond which there is nothing.
> Space, time and causality are not the objective realities, but only subjective forms of our intellect and the unavoidable conclusion is this, that the world as far as it is extended in space, running on in time, ruled throughout by causality, in so far, is merely a representation of my mind and nothing beyond it.

Famous Indian, Greek and German philosophers, in different times and by different methods, reached the same conclusion:

> "The World is maya, it is illusion", says Shankaracharya (the Indian Philosopher).

> "It is a World of shadows, not of realities",says the Greek Philosopher, Plato.
>
> "It is appearance only, not the thing in itself." says the German Philosopher, Kant.

Vashisht, Sri Ram Chandra's teacher, said to his great pupil:

> This visible world has no independent existence of its own. The delusion of its existence is due to ignorance knowledge dispels this illusion. In the dark, a rope looks like a serpent and when there is light, the delusion of the serpent goes. Similarly, ignorance creates this world knowledge destroys the illusion.

8.5 Fifth Stage of Gyan

The fifth stage of Gyan is wondrous. The aspirant now feels that just as the outer world existed in his inner intellect and the outer world was but a reflection of the world in the inner self, so the creation in the inner self too, was a manifestation of the Will and Wish of the inner intellect. When he so wills, it disappears and the soul alone abides. In fact, the creations within and without are illusory, mere dreams, unrealities, and mere phenomena. The only thing real and abiding is the creator and observer of the dream, and that is his innermost soul, the Infinite Soul.

Here some seekers of Truth begin to labour under a delusion. They do not realize the subtle difference between their own soul and the Infinite Soul. They assume that because they are one with God, they are God, the Very God themselves, "Aham Brahm Asmai."

8.6 Sixth Stage of Gyan

Guru Nanak's guidance leads us to the next stage. Inspired by it, we reach the peak, the climax of Gyan. The soul merges into the Infinite Soul. Then the "Observer," the "Knower", vanishes. The seeker is out of the picture. God alone remains. Devotion, Bhakti, Bandagi flowers forth into perfection. The Sacred Book calls this state "God alone", "Ape Ap". The wave merges into the ocean, the soul into the Infinite Soul. This is not extinction - it is

Perfect Existence, it is a state of Existence and Knowledge and Beatitude in perfection:

The ray merges into the Sun,
The drop into the ocean,
The light merges into Light
And Reflection is attained.

suraj kirin mile jal ka jal hua ram
joti joti rali samparan thia ram

Guru Arjan - Bilawal.

For some time, the devotee fluctuates between the fourth, fifth, and sixth stages. Progressing, he definitely emerges into the fifth stage, and then into the sixth and final stage, where he abides. Now lie perceives that he never took births, nor did he ever die; pleasure and pain have never been his lot; he has never suffered pain or grief. He knows himself as unattached and perfect in all ages, the embodiment of Truth. He looks upon all his past Bhakti, or devotion, all his meditation, all his Gyan as a mere dream. Then he is at perfect peace, in the perfect bliss of Sahej-merging into the Fountainhead of Reality!

Meditation and 1st Duration How long does it take to advance from a lower stage to a higher stage? No one can say; no one can judge. The wayfarer has to take every step himself. Whether the pace of his progress is to be slow or fast, and whether he will reach the destination soon or late-it depends on his intuitive understanding, his enthusiasm, his perseverance, his industry and association with advanced souls. The devotee must be as unbiased as the scientist. Keen, close, careful observation, systematic arrangement of facts, intelligent deduction of conclusions, and courage to test them, are essential.

Progress in the preliminary stages of Simran and Gyan is slow, very slow. But when the devotee becomes habituated to assimilating new ideas and impulses, the pace quickens. At the beginning there is at times, a feeling of despair; the pace is painfully slow, but when the seeker progresses further, optimism takes the place of pessimism and the pace of progress is quickened.

The devotee must never cease to pray humbly and devoutly. Without prayer, the progress is blocked and devotion meaningless.

Chapter 9

Faith and it's two stages

First Stage In the first stage, we hear and believe. What we are told, we believe to be true. As a matter of fact, we have greater faith in the bonafides of the man who tells us than in what we are told. Ask a schoolboy: "How much is two and two?" He will readily reply, "Four." If you tell him, "Two and two makes five and not four," he will say, "you are wrong. Two and two makes four and not five, for my teacher says so." He has full faith in his teacher, though he may be unaware of the underlying basic truth of what his teacher has taught him.

If a child were to ask the teacher on the very first day of his schooling, "Why and how do two and two make four?" the teacher would probably say, "I can't explain the reason to you just now, but when you go to higher classes, you will be able to know the reason."

In a New Year calendar, there are forecasts of solar and lunar eclipses, dates of holidays and the like, through astronomical calculations. We accept all this information unquestioningly, and make our programmes accordingly. Even through we are ignorant of astronomy, yet we believe the astronomer. Should there be no such faith, the affairs of the world would come to a standstill.

Similarly, the devotee, in the initial stages, must have full faith in his preceptors. This is the only adequate and useful course for him to adopt.

At the same time, spiritual stages can be truly understood only through personal experience. And when we have faith in our preceptor's sound guidance, we would do well to go ahead with his instructions. This does not imply

that the learner must blindly follow a preceptor. Blind faith leads nowhere we stumble and flounder at every step. Though the learner should have faith in his preceptor, he must also have the courage and eagerness to test what the preceptor teaches, Romain Rolland writes somewhere:

> "Faith does not mean a blind acceptance, it has degenerated among downtrodden races, but rather a living and seeing intuition."

Second Stage Unshakable faith in a truth is born only when we have actually tried and tested it. When we have tested the teachings of our spiritual preceptor, and found them true, there arises in us a strange and overpowering sense of reverence for our teacher. Our faith is then as unshakable as the Himalayas, and abides through life.

The development of real faith is not a question of weeks and months. It requires patience, perseverance, and time for its maturity. Many riddles are not solved even after years of spiritual striving and research. With all my perfect faith in the teachings of the ten Gurus and the Guru Granth, there were things, which I grasped readily and there were things, which I took long to understand. There are still certain problems that I do not claim to understand fully. But my faith in the Guru's Word has ever been unshaken.

> Full faith in the Guru's Word grew not in me,
> till I had tested it myself.
>
> *jau na dekhao apni naini*
> *tau na patijau gur ki bani*

This sacred verse describes the signs of a true spiritual seeker or a religious scientist. Some erring, misleading religious preachers have described God as a terror and something entirely impossible to realize. This has created a sense of despair among seekers of God, thereby creating an atheistic trend.I believe I am not yet ripe to understand many things. By Guru's grace I shall understand them all in proper time. I have found that when I was actually qualified to understand certain things, understanding dawned upon me effortlessly. Haste and impatience are as much out of place in spiritual research as sloth and undifference. For the gift of faith, we need patience, perseverance, and sustained efforts.

9.1 Putting self foremost or egoism

To put self foremost is a chronic malady,
But its cure lies within
By His Grace, if you meditate on the Divine Name,
And are in union with Him,
You shed the malady.

haumai diragh rog hai daru bhi is mahi
kirpa kare je apni ta gur ka sabad kamae

Guru Angad Dev - Asa Di Var.

As the Guru says, the gravest malady from which mankind suffers is egoism, "The malady of egoism is ingrained." it separates man from man and sets up walls between ourselves and the rest of mankind. This vice impels us to spend our whole life, and to use all our resources and all our intelligence to acquire wealth and property, honour and fame. Lust, anger, avarice, infatuation and pride are all creations of selfishness. When we are frustrated and thwarted in the acquisition of something that we have set our heart upon, we feel pained and humiliated. To gain our ends, we devise diverse ways and means. We resort to oppression, deceit and injustice to achieve our ends.

Egoism separates man from God. Through this vice man goes astray and suffers for it, and earns death as the wages of sin. But for it man would be supremely happy. The veil of self-importance hangs between man and God.

The Bridegroom (God) and the Bride (Soul) dwell together,
And between them, rises the high partition of egoism
The Perfect Master demolished the wall of egoism
Then alone, saith Nanak,
The Soul unites with God.

dhan pir ka ik hi sang vasa
vich haumai bhit karari
gur purai haumai bhit tori
jan Nanak mile Banvari

Guru Ramdas - Malar.

The veil is as thin as the wings of a butterfly,
Since we see Him not, He appears to be far from us

Through egoism we lose our divine vision and we create a cabined, cribbed world of our own, on account of our limited human vision. Each one of us creates a world of our own, in accordance with own limited human vision. The world appears to us according to our own viewpoint. Egoism debars us from the divine vision. There is the Divine Spark in man, and, consequently, even the vastest of worlds woven by him cannot satisfy his ambitions.

Few are content with the realisation of their ambitions.
trisna virle hi ki bujhi hai

Guru Arjan - Gauri.

And how can ambition be satiated? The erring man seeks infinite bliss and perfect peace, in the achievement of his objectives in this finite world of matter! This he cannot have, nor does his quest for peace and joy end. His self interest grows and thereby intensifies his mental torture

The sinner knows not the bliss of tasting nectar
There is the thorn of self within,
As he walks, it pricks and he suffers,
The myrmidons of Death strike him on the head.

sakat Hari ras sad na jania
tin antar haumai kanda he
jio jio chaleh chubhai dukh pavahi
jam kal sahahi sir danda he

Guru Ramdas - Gauri.

In the Guru Granth the Gurus refer to egoism as pain, disease, agony, fretful fever, thirst, poison, illusion, Veil, mist, etc. However, they affirm that the cure for this malady lies within us:

Self importance is a chronic malady,
But its cure lies within
By His grace, if you meditate on the Divine Name,
And are in union with Him,
You shed the malady.

haumai diragh rog hai daru bhi is mahi
kirpa kare je apni ta gur ka sabad kamae

Guru Angad Dev - Asa-di-Var.

9.1.1 Cure within

What is this cure within? Careful reflection reveals the truth of the dictum. Fever is a symptom of toxins, or poisons in the system. Thus, it is a disease, but fever is, at the same time, a natural means of burning up this poison. Thus viewed, it is a remedy, a cure. Similarly, on the one side, egoism is indicative of our wrong angle of vision, but, on the other, due to this malady, we suffer terribly and have to pass through a multitude of entanglements, trials and tribulations till our eyes open, the scales fall from them, and we turn to the path of devotion, and seek salvation in life.

Self-importance embitters our life. Now and then, we begin to reflect, "Oh, what have I done?" This is followed by Repentance, a sense of self-surrender and renunciation, Tyag. Finally, when we are again in harmony with our original self, we find that whereas, on the one hand, self awareness is a source of terrible pain, it is, on the other, a saviour, instrumental in saving us from those pains.

The penalty of suffering which directs our steps on the right path cannot possibly be bad. Thus, awareness of self is both a disease and a cure. It is a mirror, wherein the soul sees its sad, grief-stricken, despondent visage. As it watches itself, there is bred in it contempt for its painful, pitiable plight, and it has a glimpse of its original, lustrous, bright self. The reflection then dawns. "Oh, I was a heavenly essence, but through error and delusion, I am full of fear, pain and destitution."

Egoism has been called a chronic ailment. It cannot be shed easily or quickly. The Guru's Word tells us of several remedies for it.

9.2 First Antidote

Simran is to this vice antidote. It brings the soul nearer to God, and, in consequence, divine attributes begin to flow into us and the human weaknesses are gradually shed. Or we may put it like this: the human viewpoint changes-and develops into the Divine angle of vision, which is the end and aim of religion. By this change of viewpoint, we are turned into angels.

> The Devotee of God must be God-like
> *hari jan aisa chahiai taisa Hari hi hoi*

Kabir - Saloka.

When the illusion is shed, God alone remains.

kaho Kabir man bhaia ananda
gaia bharam rahia Paramananda

Kabir - Gauri.

9.3 Second Antidote

Through selfless service, egoism, is not entirely stamped out, but it is very much enfeebled and attenuated. To work for the good of humanity and not for self, to spend one's self for the service of mankind, to keep in view the welfare of others, instead of one's own gains, to see God in all and to look upon the service of mankind as the service of God- this works as an antidote to it "egoism has its cure latent in itself", would seem to imply that when we make the service of man the ideal of our life, instead of seeking pleasure in selfish gains, the egoism which pulled us down and degraded us, begins to elevate us and instead of doing harm it becomes a useful weapon.

The worldly-wise cannot fully understand this truth. If unlike the western outlook of life we see God pervading the family, the nation, the whole of humanity, and we dedicate all our service to Him who dwells in all, we would be rendering Him true service.

If we live up to the ideal of a dedicated life of service, our primary, elementary needs of life would be automatically met by Providence. If a businessman were intent on doing selfless service to his fellowman, he would earn profits effortlessly, as it were. Wealth grows by alms giving. It is so hard to give credence to this truth, but if we actually try it, we find it cent-per-cent an axiom, a sound truth. I have found in the homes of virtuous people the blessings of happiness, contentment, peace, and charity.

9.4 Providential Guidance

In the measure in which self-interest decreases in us, in the same measure, Providence assumes our burdens:

When of 'me' and 'mine' alone we think,
Not a single thing we get done!

When 'me' and 'mine' to the background shrink,
We progress for God takes the burden on.

jab lag meri meri karai
tab lag kaj ek nahi sarai
jab meri meri miti jai
tab prabh kaj sawarahi ai

Kabir - Bhairon

We create impediments in our own way by our shrewdness, our cunning, and our anxious striving. Thereby, we hamper and impede natural forces in their operation. The truth of this maxim is eternal. The man of God discovers for himself that with these shortcomings, he is like a man rowing a boat-up-stream, against the current. He therefore, surrenders and resigns himself to the Will of God:

If you would have a thing done, pray to heaven.
He will do it, if you have full faith in Him.

kita lorhiai kam so Har pahi akhiai
karaj de sawari satgur sachi sakhiai

Guru Ramdas - Sri Rag Var.

Though the torments created by egoism lose their force through selfless service, yet Simran is essential for eradicating it. Selfless service purifies us, but Simran alone brings harmony and union with God. It is possible for a devotee to attain to higher stage of spiritual progress, thereby getting rid of ego even without the aid of social service, but it is impossible to reach higher planes of spiritual development and attain unity with God through the sole agency of service, without the aid of Simran. For spiritual oneness with God, seclusion, and sustained meditation, Simran is indispensable.

9.5 Egoism and Personality

Some people imagine that the elimination of ego would reduce the personality to a mere cipher, and they argue that where personality ends, life ends too, as it were. The soul then, they say, would be devoid of feeling and lose its vim and vigour thereby. Some ignorant and ill-informed people take salvation also to mean something like that.

I myself laboured under this delusion for a number of years and imagined that I was a mere zero, with the result that I lost all vigour, all strength of will, mind, and body. I felt I was neither here nor there, a man of straw, of no consequence whatsoever. I was thus going down, down, down. My health declined; I was a victim of fear and fantasy. Then I prayed earnestly to know the correct meaning of the elimination of ego and saw a number of mahatmas, and read English and Punjabi literature on the subject.

S. Man Singh, a Judge, (now deceased) introduced me to Bhai Sahib (later Doctor) Vir Singh. His counsel did me a world of good. It revolutionized my concept of ego, and I regained my normal health and strength and buoyancy of spirits. I grasped the full significance of egoism and realized that its death implied the transformation of a man into an angel, of a weakling into a potent force, the merging our souls into the Infinite Soul.

Devotion to God, or Simran, kills the ego, and God is installed in its place. The devotee's nature undergoes a revolutionary change, with a change in his angle of vision. Instead of self, which creates the cycle of birth and death, he finds the Deathless God in operation in all things.

The small child's world is a world of toys. He cries and weeps when a toy breaks, but when he gets a prettier and more costly toy, he forgets all about the broken one and takes a fancy to the new prize. Similarly, when we realize that our egoism has gained for us mere toys, which are subject to breakage and have even made us miserable, and then if we find that elimination of self would bring us unfading, undying and invaluable gifts, our old egoism dies.

We forget the loss of an inferior thing on getting something better - this is human nature. Similarly when we find that our ego is detrimental to us, we discover a way of life that has in its fold perfection and freedom from care and want a life of infinite joy; radiant health, perfect peace, poise and contentment, with eternal life, we are certainly only too glad to shed our self and frantically cling to the new way of life. In fact, the life of egoism can die only if we really hate it and love a life purged of ego.

There is no quicker or easier way to conquer this spirit of egoism than Simran. The seeker sees in Simran, the world as it is. The veil of illusion is rent, and he sees into the heart of things and distinguishes between true and false values, between ephemeral, transitory objects, and things that are

eternal. He is reborn in spirit and revels and exalts in his newly won, precious prize, and finally merges into Truth.

9.6 Third Antidote

The third way to eliminate self is to control the cravings of our lower self. If we do not control our mind, we get into terrible straits and are constantly slaves of passions. If we yield once to the lower self, we are likely to do so fifty times more thereafter. These cravings cease not without communion with God. To seek to satisfy our cravings is to sharpen and intensify them still more. Desires thus grow from more to more.

9.6.1 The Innate Nature of Mind

In a way, our habit of discontentment is also a blessing. The very defect of our dissatisfaction becomes a virtue and a means to deliverance from sin and suffering. But for such discontentment, we would never attain the stage of communion with God. But for it, we would not advance and like the proverbial lotus-eaters we would rest on our laurels. Contentment may halt our pace indefinitely, or, in other words, our spiritual advancement may come to a dead stop. But we are never satisfied with any achievement for long. Illusions there are for us but soon the veil of illusion vanishes, the scales fall from our eyes, and our angle of vision, our view of happiness keeps changing. Thus our spiritual progress continues and ends only when we reach the fountainhead of perfect peace and bliss, and are one with it.

> The ray merges into the Sun,
> The drop merges into the Ocean,
> The light merges into Light,
> And Perfection is attained.
>
> *suraj kirin mil jal ka jalu hua ram*
> *joti joti rali sampuran thia ram.*

Guru Arjan - Bilawal.

9.7 How to Kill the Lower Self

For the elimination of ego we must control ourselves. We must resist undesirable impulses and should resort to Simran. At bed time, a certain

Mahatma would exhort his disciples, "Brothers, the night is over us, we have to wrestle with our mind." We must not be helpless slaves of impulses in eating, drinking, laughing, sporting, and in dress. We must not let ourselves remain unbridled. Not that we should cease to attend to our elementary, essential needs. We must gradually wean ourselves from excessive worldliness and turn to the spiritual way of life. This creates a taste for spiritual nectar, over-powering the illusory pleasures of the flesh.

As self begins to recede, we feel thrills of joy, and of freedom from care and want. We feel the heavenly bliss and we begin to mould ourselves to a Godly life, till at last, only that much of self is left as is essential to maintain life in us, Our soul is in communion with God. We experience spiritual inebriation. We begin to be carefree. We receive an infinitely precious, abiding, beautiful gift. This is the last state of merging in God, where only that much of self is left as is essential to enjoy Beatitude. This is the crown and climax of spiritual union, when the lover and the beloved, the soul, and God are one. "The two units, growing into one."

When self is completely eliminated, the body does not survive. Self creates the body, egoism maintains it, and when self goes, the body goes too, for the body is no longer needed. We need a ladder to go up to the housetop and to come down from it, but when we have climbed up to the roof and do not have to climb down, the ladder becomes unnecessary and can be dispensed with. The cycle of birth, rebirth, and death ends when the final goal is achieved and self becomes superfluous:

> The cycle of birth and death ends for me,
> The burning furnace has cooled,
> The Master has endowed me with the Cooling Name.
>
> *avan jan rahio*
> *tapat karhaia bujh gaio*
> *gur sital nam deo*

Guru Arjan - Maru.

About egoism and a life purged of self, Mr. Edward Carpenter has the following to say in his book, *A visit to a Gyani*:

> The West seeks the individual consciousness-the enriched mind and ready perceptions and memories, individual hopes and fears,

ambitions, loves, conquests-the local self in all its phases and forms and sorely doubts whether such a thing as a universal consciousness exists. The East seeks the universal consciousness, and in those cases where its quest succeeds, individual self and life thin away to a mere film and are only the shadows cast by the glory revealed beyond.

The individual consciousness takes the form of "Thought" which if fluid and mobile like quicksilver, perpetually in a state of change and unrest, fraught with pain and effort; the other consciousness is not in the form of "Thought." It touches, sees, hears and is those things which it perceives without motion, without distinction of subject and object but with a vast and incredible joy.

9.8 Humility

Just as food is tasteless without salt, so devotion without humility and meekness is dull and drab and cannot realise the objective. If devotion is to realize its objective, there must be firm faith, devout prayer, Simran, and above all, there must be humility.

Devotion begins and ends with humility. The devotee's humility assumes the form of prayer, and devout humble prayer reaches the Throne of God. The devotee comes across saintly souls who direct his thoughts heavenward through Simran. Through Simran, the devotee discovers the eternal relationship between himself and God, and thereby attains great powers. Then begins a period of test and trial for him. With the birth of superhuman powers in him, there is the peril of conceit and pride triumphing over his humility and weakness. He in home humility is deeply ingrained stands firm and unshaken in his trial and continues his quest for Truth untrammeled.

The devotees who with all his newborn powers remains meek and humble, understands why the Gurus have stressed the need for humility in the pursuit of Truth. At the outset of his school career, the schoolboy is told that two and two makes four and not the reason or the philosophy of this postulate, which is revealed later. Similarly, the devotee is impressed at the beginning with the urgency and importance of humility, and he finds when he is far advanced, the reason why humility is emphasized.

Be you the dust of the feet of all,
Then may you come to us,

hoho sabhna ki renka tau ao hamarai pas

Guru Arjan - Maru.

The ideal laid down by the Gurus is that we should become God-like, and thus merge into God. When through Nam or Simran, the devotee draws nearer to God, and perceives God clearly, he is wonder-struck to find that God, the Creator of all creation, the fountain-head of all powers and forces, the Perfect, Almighty is yet infinitely humbled. His humility is infinite beyond all conception.

And then the devotee finds that omnipotence and humility are inseparable and must go together, and God is Almighty, because He is cent-per-cent egoless.

When the devotes finds that humility is an essential attribute of God, he is also moulded in the same pattern. He discovers the scientific truth in Kabir's lines:

There are grains of sugar scattered in the sand,
The elephant cannot pick them up;
Saith Kabir, discard all pride of caste and birth,
Be like the ant and pick up the grains of sugar.

hari bhaio khand ret mahi bikhrio
hasti chunio na jai
kahi kabir kul jati pati taj
chites hoi chun khai

Kabir - Ramkali.

It is an entirely erroneous conception that humility breeds weakness or cowardice. A weak man is never genuinely humble. Humility and weakness are poles apart. Where there is weakness, there is not true humility, and where there is true humility, there is no weakness. To be strong, and to possess all grounds for pride and conceit, and yet to be meek and humble-this is humility, indeed, and this reality is emphasised by the Gurus.

I am a sacrifice unto him,
Who is strong, and yet is meek;
I am a sacrifice unto him
Who has all, and yet is humble
I am a sacrifice unto him
Who is wise, and yet so simple;
Such a one is acceptable here and hereafter.

hautis vitoh varia
honde tan jo hoi nitana
hautis vitoh varia honde man jo hoi nimani
hautis vitoh varia chhad sianap hoi iana
din duni dargah parvana

Bhai Gurdas.

Unlike weakness, humility is a force that conquers the mightiest powers of the world. He who conquers the world with force is supposed to be powerful, but he who conquers himself through humility, is truly high souled. A more powerful man may conquer a powerful man, but he who is meek and humble is invincible. A meek person's seeming defeats are in fact his victories.

The tormentors (Chandu and others) of Guru Arjan seemingly crushed the Guru, but the apparent defeat was his eternal victory. It not only immortalized the Guru but sowed the seed that brought forth countless martyrs. The Guru's tormentors wanted to gain their objective by tormenting his flesh, but his spirit remained unconquered for where humility is, weakness is not, and thus the oppressors were foiled in their designs.

I pray for the gift of humility,
My earth-like lowliness is my strong weapon,
Evil cannot withstand humility.

garibi gada hamari
khana sagal ren chhari
is agai ko na tikai vekari

Guru Arjan - Sorath.

9.9 Tyag or self-surrender and self recounciation

Tyag is a quality of the heart, independent of considerations of dress, appearance or external form. A naked, ash-besmeared, forest recluse may actually be full of worldliness, with a passion for Mammon, and a wealthy prince, may be a Tyagi. This does not imply that all those in the guise of Fakirs and Mahatmas, are false and hypocritical; nor doer, it mean that all householders are self-denying Tyagis. True Tyag is the lot of the blessed. They may be householders, or they may be recluses and ascetics.

A little reflection will show that renunciation in the true sense comes to those who are satiated. Beggars range from kings and princes downward. There are untold Varieties of beggary, and the world seems to abound in beggars. There are beggars, who beg for bread; there are others, who pray and beg for wealth, children, honour, health, power, fame comfort, all are beggars. The contented people are few and far between. Appearances are of course, deceptive, and those that appear to be happy are so often really unhappy. It is, therefore, difficult to list the marks and signs of a self-denying Tyagi. I have come across Tyagis in different strata of society; I have seen Tyags, among Fakirs, whose very presence purifies us.

There was a Faqir who used to squat in a busy bazaar in Calcutta. One day, I gave him four paise. He flung away two paise, and went to a baker's shop where he bought a loaf of bread for two paise. To test him, after a few days, I gave him eight or ten paise. Without bothering to look at me, he kept two paise and threw away the rest, and then from the Maidan, where he then was, he went his way. I followed him as before, and then catching up with him, I inquired; "Why did you fling away the rest of the coppers? They would have served you for the evening's loaf of bread; after all you will buy loaf of bread this evening or the next morning.

Then, for the first time, the Faqir looked me full in the face and said, "Oh fool! Will God cease to be in the evening or next morning!"

I can never forget the indifferent, fearless, and contented look of the Faqir. The words were full of deep, spiritual meaning, and I readily grasped it. In my suit of the latest out bought from a European tailoring concern, I stood before the Faqir bewildered. 1 felt that his guileless and detached soul saw through my sordid worldliness and my mean outlook, despite my fashionable

garb. I felt that he was pulling me up to a sublime spiritual realm from my low level of worldliness. My eyes opened. I felt that I was a begger, while the Faqir was a king. I apologised to him and with my hands in my pockets, in deep thought, I seated myself in my car, but I fully realized the magic of the Faqir's words. Unfortunately, I never met the Faqir again.

9.9.1 Three States of Tyag (Renunciation)

First State We should look upon the world as a park in which to stroll, and we should thank Heaven for permitting as this privilege. In this park there are beautyspots, and there are ugly spots. We should view both and pass on just as a traveller crosses hills and dales, deserts and valleys, goes through towns and villages, meets all kinds of people, tarries with them awhile, makes friends with some, and yet all the time, the feeling uppermost in his mind is that after his journey, he will reach home. Similarly, our life on Earth must be treated as a journey. Some people might imagine that this sort of ideology is indicative of despair and despondency. In fact this is not so. On the other hand through this ideology we are in a better position to enjoy the sights and sounds of the world, and to acquire the necessary experience.

The maturing maiden growing into young hood woman in the home of her parents knows well enough that she must, some time or other go to her prospective husband's home, but this thought does not embitter her stay nor eclipse her happiness, in her parents' home. On the other hand this very thought endears her parents and girl friends to her, and she is ready for her future home, when ever the time comes.

When a ship sails from Calcutta with passengers bound for various countries aboard it, all the passengers know from the very outset that they will be together for a brief period, and therefore they do their utmost to make themselves pleasant to one another. When the passengers disembark at their several destinations, they suffer no wrench at parting from their fellow-passengers. This is all due to the conviction in the minds of the passengers that they must part company sometime or other. If we look upon our life in the world as a journey and act accordingly, we would feel no shock at the passing away of our kith and kin and friends, nor would we grieve when we have to part from them.

Men and birds and beasts,
All come together 'neath a shady tree
Some of them are sweet of tongue,

And some of them talk bitter as gall.
And when the light of day doth dawn,
They go their several ways.
Thus we come and live awhile,
and then we part and part forever
Thus we meet and live and die,
And thus the journey ends.

birkhai heth sabh jant ikathe
ik tate ik bolan mithe
asat udot bhaia uth chale
jio jio audh vehavania

Guru Arjan - Maru.

Second Stage The Second Stage of Tyag is to reduce our needs day by day, We have to keep a check over ourselves so that our needs are reduced to the bare minimum without which life cannot be maintained. With a little effort, most of our superfluous needs can be eliminated. Simran could then become a prime hobby. Nay our sheet-anchor. We should eat and clothe ourselves to the minimum extent. They should not deflect our attention to unworthy things. The following hints in the Guru Granth are worth remembering:

What to eat and what to drink?
Eat what you will,
If it causes not ache,
Nor lead to evil ways.
What to eat and what to wear?
Wear what you will,
If it cause not stiffness,
Nor lead to evil ways.

baba hor khana khusi khuar
jit khadhai tan pirhiai
man mahi chale vikar
baba hor painan khusi khuar
jit padhai tan pirhiai
man mahi chale vikar

Guru Nanak - Sri Rag.

At this stage, we shed all craving for the pleasures of the flesh; no bodily ailments torment; there are no troublesome habits; the body is under perfect control; and there is harmony with God through Simran, so that both mind and body are under full control.

The Third Stage When we advance beyond those two stages, we are entirely detached from the world, its pleasures and its charms. We perceive that this world of senses is a difficult stage in the journey of life and that it has been traversed. We shed our worldly ways or the craving for the pleasures of the flesh, so much no that we look upon the body as of no consequence, like the man who has been ferried across a river, and having he stepped on the other bank, no longer needs the ferry. The devotee is surcharged with super-consciousness, and is ever in a state of bliss and buoyancy; the cravings of the flesh die; the promptings of the mind and thought die; and the devotee is ever happy, like a flower in full blossom, and ultimately he is one with God.

Many high souled Mahatamas, even after attaining this blessed state, retain their mortal frame for the propagation of Truth, for the good of humanity. There are, however, others in whom even the desire for the good of humanity does not remain, and they shed their mortal coil, as a snake sloughs its skin, and are merged with Light.

I was told by a Mahatma, who spent most of his time in mountain caves that his Guru dwelt in a secluded mountain grotto, which was extremely difficult of access. He always went once a year to see his Guru and on one such visit, he found his Guru in a state of Samadhi, or trance. He greeted the Guru a number of times, and yet the Guru's eyes remained closed. He gently shook the Guru's body. The very touch reduced the body to dust. The disciple was full of fear, but after a while he felt an overpowering sense of sadness, and then a sense of supreme peace and calm followed. It appears that the Guru had shed his body voluntarily. Nobody knew how long the Guru had been dead, but there was not the slightest sign of odour.

Some people might find it difficult to believe what I have described, but one who attains to union with God can easily shake off his mortal frame at will. The first, the fifth, and the tenth Gurus shed their bodies at will. Furthermore, the mortal remains of the above three Gurus could not be found. This is the Third Stage of Tyag (Renunciation) through which pass some fortunate souls, ending their life's journey smilingly, sportingly and effortlessly.

The aforesaid states of Tyag are attained, as it were effortlessly through Simran or Nam. Of course, the devotee is constantly wrestling with his lower self but those who take their refuge in Simran or Nam constantly receive their inspiration, guidance and succour from God. By His Grace they rise from high to higher. There are pitfalls and there are times when a devotee feels that it was a child's play to attain to higher spiritual planes and that it was an easy affair to reach the stage of blessedness wherein thought is absent; the devotee feels as if God's Grace was not needed. When these thoughts cross his mind, the spiritual progress comes to a standstill, all devotion become dry-as-dust, there is no spiritual ecstasy, and the mind loses its repose. I can say from personal experience that devotion cannot attain to perfection, nor realise the supreme objective, without deep humility, love, fervent devotion arid an intense yearning for Union with God. Many a time pride and conceit thwart us and our spiritual development comes to a stop. Heartfelt, devout prayers and sincere repentance are the cure and corrective for it.

Chapter 10

Miracles

Who are we to correct or supercede His laws?
The Creator is not subject to error.

nahi hot kachhu dou bara
karnaiharu na bhulanhara

Guru Arjan - Gauri Bawan Akhri.

10.1 The Laws of Nature are Eternal

The laws of God are eternal. Those who take miracles to mean that for the sake of Prophets, Gurus, Devotees, God breaks, or violates His own laws, do not understand His nature. The various manifestations of nature are sometimes taken as miracles by the uninitiated. To a scientist these are of no abnormal consequences.

The generality of people are unaware of the higher laws of the soul, and consequently, they regard as miracles things that are but ordinary occurrences to one who is aware of the realm of the Spirit. Mr. Edward Carpenter says:

> "There is nothing abnormal or miraculous about the matter; that faculties acquired are on the whole the result of evolution and training and they have distinct laws and an order of their own."

In the same connection, Miss Mary Baker Eddy says:

> "Miracle is that which is divinely nature but must be learned humanly; a phenomenon of science."

> "The world is made up of innumerable planes of consciousness and each has its own distinct laws; the laws of one plane do not hold good for another. A miracle is nothing but a sudden descent, a bursting forth of another consciousness and its powers into this plane of matter. There is precipitation upon the material mechanism of a higher plane. The result we call a miracle, because we see a sudden alteration, an abrupt interference with the natural laws of our own ordinary range, but the reason and order of it we do not know or see, because the source of the miracle is in another plane."

Conversation with the Mother
of Sri Aurobindo's Ashram.

Baba Attal revived a boy who was bitten by a serpent, and, according to common conception was dead. The beholders interpreted it as a miracle, whereas to Baba Attal, or to those of advanced spiritual development, it was no miracle, for they knew that the soul is deathless, and life has no end. In a dream we are born, live and die. Baba Attal, by reviving his friend, dispelled the illusion that the soul was subject to death, or that 1ife could have an end. He who ur1derstaflds the reality of life, could, if he so choose, direct the soul to re-enter a body, and have a new lease of life.

Guru Hargobind was displeased with Baba Attal, not because he violated, or broke, any law of God, or invented a law of his own, but because of the justified feat that powerful people, khans, nawabs, magnates, and others, would throng to them and pester them to revive their dead ones. Another cause for the Guru's displeasure was that while his father was occupying the pontifical throne, it was unbecoming on the part of his son to display his extraordinary spiritual power's. The Guru said,"Two swords cannot be sheathed in one scabbard."

Thus Baba Attal again illustrated the truth that the soul was immortal and that the soul could cheerfully shed or shake off the body whenever it chose to do so.

Guru Hargobind himself, and the rest of the Gurus in their lives, employed the higher laws of the spirit, as and when the need arose. Even some spiritually advanced Sikhs have done so. So-called miracles do not violate any law of Nature; in fact, they are proof Positive of its higher laws.

10.2 The Sincere Devotee.

The sincere devotee effortlessly acquires a knowledge of higher spiritual laws, and as his inner eye opens, illusions and delusions are dispelled and he finds spiritual Powers growing in him till a stage is reached when so-called miracles are within his reach.

Who lives in God, or in whom doth God live and work,
Maya is his hand-maiden
With folded hands Maya stands;
Standing thus, she feels much honoured!

maiya dasi bhagta ki kar kamavai
charni lagai ta mahal pavai

Guru Amardas - Gauri.

Spiritual Powers which know no end,
Are at the command of such a devotee.

navanidhi atharah sidhi pichhai lagian phirahi
jo hari hirdai sada vasai

Guru Amardas - Sorath.

Simran engenders great spiritual Powers, but as a rule, Sikhism does not permit the resort of these things. In fact, the exercise of these powers for selfish ends is very much denounced.

They would wield power spiritual,
To gain their selfish ends,
They are victims of self-interest
The abode of God is not in them,
Their hearts are turned to other things.

ridhi sidhi sabh moh hai
nam na vasai mani ai

Guru Amardas - Wadhans.

If the devotee falls a prey to the lure of miracle working, his spiritual progress is blocked, and often such a soul suffers from an excess of ego, the elimination of which is the mark of devotion. We must, therefore, guard against this danger.

To have fore-knowledge of coming events, to read another's mind, to bewitch one whom we love, to cause suffering or pain to one with whom we are angry, to realize the object, or objects of our desire, to impel the personal presence of somebody whom we cherish, or think of, to conquer whomsoever we look in the face, to bring about the recovery of an ailing person-these and other petty achievements are within the compass of people of ordinary spiritual development.

I appeal to all such people not to use their powers for selfish ends, or to harm anyone, else they will be stranded and bogged, and their spiritual progress will come to a dead stop. For others' good, however, high-souled people do, at times, use their spiritual powers, but not for exhibitionism, or for selfish ends.

A Mahatma writes,

> Ambition has been the undoing of many yogis. That canker can hide long. Many people start on the Path without any sense of it. But when they get powers, their ambition rises up, all the more violently because it had not been thrown out in the beginning.

A story is told of a yogi, who had attained wonderful powers. His disciples invited him to a great dinner, which was served on a big low table. The disciples asked their Master to show his power in some way. He knew he should not, but ambition was present in him, and he thought: "After all, it is a very innocent thing and it may prove to them that such things are possible and teach them the greatness of God." So he said:

"Take away the table, but only the table, let the table-cloth remain as it is, with all the dishes upon it."

The disciples carried out: "How can we do that? Everything will fall down."

But he insisted, and they removed the table from under the cloth. Lo, the miracle! The cloth and all that was upon it remained there just as though the table was underneath. But all of a sudden, the Master jumped up and rushed out, screaming and crying," Never more shall I have a disciple, never more. Woe on me I have betrayed my God." His heart was on fire, he had used his powers for selfish ends.

This does not mean that there is no use for such powers. But they have to be used in the same way as they come. They come through union with God. They must be used by the Will Divine and not for display.

So long as a devotee has not acquired a fairly full consciousness of God, he must be on his guard against the working of miracles. Spiritual powers increase with spiritual advancement, and they tend to lure away a devotee from the pinnacle of perfection and beatitude.

To realize God is like climbing the peak of a high mountain. As the devotee climbs up, he feels fatigued, blasts of cool refreshing air, thick groves of shady trees, springs of limpid water and water channels lure him. Miracle-working powers burst forth in a blaze of glory and tend to tempt the devotee. They who are lured away by such charms cannot reach the mountain peak. May be, the devotee is so charmed by these attractions that he ceases to think of climbing the peak, and instead he may get entrapped and entangled in the meshes of Maya, or pleasures of the flesh. The devotee must therefore be alert in this last stage. The golden rule is that never should miracles be worked for display or for selfish motives. He, who passes through this stage unscathed, safe and sound, merges into Brahm for all time.

Chapter 11

Samadhi or Trance

When the last stage of Simran, which is free of all thought-wave, and the last stage of Gyan, where all introspection and reasoning ends, coalesce and merge into each other, there arises the state of Samadhi.

The Mind resides in God,
And the Thought resides in Him,
Such men of God are one with God.

man mahi manua ehit mahi chieta
aise hari ke log atita

Guru Nanak - Basant.

At this stage, the mind ceases to crave for any further research; it is at perfect rest, in a state of perfection, or we might say, the mind ceases to be, and with such quietitude of the mind all thought dies:

Effortless trance, thought-free.
This is union with God
Good luck brings us this boon.

sahaj samadh upadh rahat
phun badai bhag livlagi

In a trance, like this all sounds of voices are inaudible, for consciousness loses its connection with our ears. When we have tasted of the ambrosia of this beatitude, we do not like to revert to the normal state-to the world of sights, and sounds, and smells, in the words of the poet, "I would sacrifice all

wisdom for a moment of blissful trance, Oh, Thou, The Master of destinies, do merge me in Thy Super-Consciousness."

Those who attain this stage look upon the world as a mere child's play, and are averse to taking part in it.

We wish to remain in this state undisturbed. We are freed of even the bare necessities of life because while in such trance we are above all physical emotions. Those who attain this stage, have full control and command over the body-their spirit commands their bodies. Those who are aware of these spiritual mysteries know that at the command of the spirit, the body can be isolated from the spirit and all physical influences and feelings.

We must remember that science and philosophy have proved that thought immensely influences and affects the body. In fact, the body is the result of and an embodiment to our thoughts. When we attain spiritual perfection, we create faith and faith awakens powers within us, so that the body can be transformed according to our wishes and should we so choose, the body can be reduced to its constituent elements and the spirit gains unity with God.

Personally, I have not attained this stage, but, intuitively, I do believe that it was possible for Guru Nanak to remain invisible in the Wain Stream; he could shed the body at will and when the controversy arose over the question of cremation or burial of his remains, the body could disappear at the command of the spirit. And similarly we also in the process of cremation of dead bodies reduce them to their basic elements. Similarly, advanced spiritual souls shed their bodies. Kabir says, "I may become air-like."

In deep Samadhi, we are beyond the bounds of time, space and causality, as we are in union with God. Just as thought travels at lightning speed and in a dream our subtle frame reaches as and where thought desires, so does the spiritually advanced soul roam at will like Shakespeare's Ariel. There are references to the disappearances of the bodies of many holy people, just as there are references in the Sikh chronicles of the final disappearance of Guru Nanak, Guru Arjan, and Guru Gobind Singh.

Doubting Thomases these days, may not give credence to these facts, and it is not astonishing because we cannot believe what we do not know and do not understand. We believe things in the light of our personal experiences only. If and where there is no such personal experience faith must be lacking.

If through Simran they attain to an advanced spiritual status they will believe in the potency of the spirit without any argumentation.

Personally, I believe in Guru Nanak's disappearance in and from the stream, and his re-appearance, alive, just as I believe in his appearance at his sister Bibi Nanaki's home, when she affectionately, devoutly, and ardently yearned to see her beloved brother. Just as scientists and inventors can produce miraculous inventions, after years of research, so the realm of the spirit has to be explored, before we can have evidence of its potentiality.

The cripple scales the mountain top
The imbecile turns intelligent
The purblind sees the three worlds,
Through grace of' the Guru he is purified.
Hear ye the praise of a perfect sadhus association
He has shed the filth of sins, his mind is purified
Devotion to God is so potent-an ant conquers an elephant
Those who are blessed by God become fearless
Before them, lions are as tame as cats
and mountains are humbled into straws
They who toiled for the pettiest coin
Are endowed with infinite wealth
Oh Thou of Infinite qualities
How can I sing Thy praises?
Grant me Thy Nam, saith Nanak, Thy humble servant.

pingul parbat par pare khal chatar bakita
andhule tribhavan sujhia gur bhet punita
mahima sadhu sang ki sunoh mere mita
mail khoi kot agh hare nirmal bhae chita
aise bhagat Gobind ki kit hasti jita
jo jo kino apno tis abhai dan dita.
singh bilai hoi gaio trin mer dekhita
sram karte dam adh kao te gani dhanita
kavan vadai kahi sakao beant gaunita
kar kirpa mohi nam deho Nanak dars rita.

Guru Arjan - Bilawal.

Not to devote any time, nor to strive to acquire knowledge of the working of the spirit, which is the most difficult and complex of sciences, and yet

to mock it and to make fun of those who have explored and conquered this realm is indeed unfair.

Simran, or ardent devotion to God, has its strong magnetic power, and has never disappointed a devotee to attain his objective. Even people who were once avowed atheists have turned to God, heart and soul, and have become great saints. We have yet to know of anybody who ardently loved God and yet failed to attain peace of soul and mind. Walk one step, one pace on the path to God, and you are rewarded with peace, and calm. Not a step on this path is ever without its fruit. To attain perfection in Simran is indeed difficult, but certainly not impossible.

The master-poet, the master-writer, the master-painter, the master-surgeon, or the master-engineer cannot be what they are without infinite effort. Similarly, it is not easy to be a perfect devotee. Saints cheerfully and gratefully pass through fiery ordeals and testing trials and tribulations, and devoutly, meekly, humbly feel that all their patience and perseverance was due to God's grace and not to any merit on their part.

Once, at the dead of night, as I sat in meditation, the thought of a seemingly insuperable difficulty and my helplessness brought an unceasing stream of tears which soaked my shirt, and then all of a sudden, a wave of peace seemed to arise from the depths of my soul. The wave swelled and embraced and enveloped my soul. I felt the ardour of the tender embrace-an embrace before which the parental, motherly, embrace paled into nothingness. My tears evaporated, and I felt the tender kiss, the tender patting on the head, and the delicious caresses! As the day dawned, my seemingly insurmountable difficulty had vanished into thin air.

Chapter 12

Light blending with light

His light is in all,
He is the Light of all lights
The light in me blazed with luster
Through His Grace.

sabh mah joti joti hai soi
tiskai chanian sabh mahi chanan hoi
gur sakhi joti pargat hoi.

Guru Nanak - Dhanasri.

His Light is diffused in all. By virtue of this light, the material body moves, the mind thinks, and life is maintained. In advanced stages, the devotee has glimpses of this Light. Even as he sits, a flash, as of lighting, appears before his eyes. But this Light radiates amazing coolness, and not heat. As strange, heavenly, ecstatic joy seems to blend with the prevailing wave of buoyancy, which the ardour of devotion has already engendered in the devotee. Though the flash of radiance ends, the previous buoyant mood lingers. The devotee feels inebriated, and infinitely exalted. He may appear to be idle, outwardly but his being is saturated with bliss.

As the devotee advances spiritually, the flashes of radiance recur much more frequently, and, at last, God's own Radiant Light is there I The Light whose brilliance dazzles! But the Light is without heat-it is the source of Bliss. This Light is believed to be the essence of life, nay, the very life of life. This Light seems to radiate freely love, grace, fearlessness, and omnipotence. This living Light is the fountain-head, the source of the universe, of all creation. We spring from this Light, and finally merge into it. The whole of creation

consciously or unconsciously, gravitates to it. This is the end of the spiritual journey, the goal, the destination. In this Light, we see all the attributes chanted in Jaap Sahib. This Living Light is present in all its splendour, all its glory, all its brilliance.

> Nanak's King appears in all His refulgent glory.
> *Nanak ka patsaho disai jahra*

Guru Arjan - Asa.

The devotee feels that he is but a ray of this Light,

> Man, thou art the image of the Light,
> Know Thy source, thy essence.
>
> *man tu joti sarup hai*
> *apna mul pachhani*

Guru Amardas - Asa.

Only then do we fully realize the truth of this dictum. Only then do we realize, in the true sense, the grandeur and sublimity of the holy Gurus. In profound humility, surcharged with ecstasy, do the tears flow, and through each pore of our body, we seem to chant:

> I grovelled in the dust,
> No one spared a thought for me,
> I was nobody,
> A mere worm was I,
> God has exalted me from low degree.
>
> *ham rulte phirte koi bat na puchhta*
> *gur Satgur sang keera ham thape*

Guru Ramdas - Gauri.

There was once, I still remember, a great congregation. Women squatted on one side, and men on the other. The Guru Granth was installed on a dais, and behind it sat that eminent saint, Sant Attar Singh Ji, with his smallish, white turban, and a dark blanket swathing his body. He sat with eyes half-closed, with a majestic mien. If I remember aright, it was a

religious congregation, as an adjunct of the Sikh Educational Conference Session. The congregation requested the Saint to chant a hymn. In his spiritual inebriation, amidst a rain of melody, there poured forth the words:

> Adore, adore the Living Light, 0 ye all.
> *Jagdi jot nu japo Khalsa ji*

Women chanted half the verse, and the men completed it. Verse by verse, the hymn was chanted:

> A true Khalsa is he
> Who adores the Living Light night and day;
> He thinks of naught, but of One alone,
> He adores Him with perfect faith and love,
> Thinking not of the austerity of fasting,
> Nor must he worship graves and samadhs,
> Nor must he believe in pilgrimages,
> Nor in austerities, nor in fantastic forms of Ahimsa,
> He must have faith in One and One alone,
> Then alone the Perfect Light blazes forth in him,
> And then is he a true Khalsa.

> *Jagat jot jpai nis basar*
> *ek bina mun naik na anai*
> *puran prem partit sajai*
> *brat gor marhi mat bhul na mania*
> *teirath dan daya tap sanjam*
> *ek bina nahi ek pachhanai*
> *puran joti jagai ghat mai*
> *tab Khalsa tahi nakhalas janai*

Guru Gobind Singh.

As the congregation chanted the burden of the hymn, the Living Light danced before my eyes. I was very small then. I could not understand the meaning of this phenomenon but I felt inebriated with wondrous ecstasy. I sat in a corner gazing at the saint and the chanting of the verse delighted and illumined me through and through.

Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh, the well-known saint-scholar of Narangwal, narrates his spiritual experience in his Punjabi autobiography, thus:

> I was employed at Abbotabad. For weeks and months, I hungered for a glimpse of God. I lost all appetite. Earthly pleasures had no charm for me. I had shed all desires, all ambitions, except one-to see God and to be at one with Him. I loved solitude. Beautiful natural scenery intensified my yearning for Him. The craving within allowed me no rest. Sleep was banished. Day and night, I yearned for Him. All other thoughts were focused on Him unceasingly and this craving grew more and more intense. One day, I returned from my office at 3 p.m. and resorted to a cave. Dusk came, the shades of night fell. My servant came to look for me, and entreated me to take my meals, which I had not done for days. I mechanically followed him. Reaching by home, I shut myself up and bolted the doors and sat down, desperately all-out to find Him, to see Him. The all-consuming passion for God was aglow in my heart and soul. And lo, I heard the stirring music of the Soul. I felt as if my body emitted sparks of light from every pore. Then I felt that my soul had detached itself from my body. I saw my Self! It was a delightful experience, but more was yet to come. All of a sudden, I saw myself flood-lit within and without. "I wished to cry out for mere joy." It felt like bursting with excessive joy. There was the same celestial light in the limitless space. I watched and wondered, in ecstatic joy. No pen could describe the ineffable sweet experience. I was a part of the limitless ocean of light. I felt light as a flower. Even with the eyes closed, I saw the sea of Celestial Light spreading all round. The day dawned and yet I could see the distinctive light, which spread through the whole of the space. Thus did God visit me. I then had a cold bath. When it was over, I was absorbed in profound contemplation. The icy-cold weather left me unconcerned and unaffected, even though I was naked, except for my headgear and underwear. I rose and went out. People watched my face and found my eyes full of charm. They whispered to each other, "What eyes!" And I heard sweet music within and without everywhere, unstruck, ineffable.

When the devotee finds that the Living Light and himself are closely interlinked, he feels a strange, indefinable sense of comfort. He finds the Source of Life and his indissoluble connection with it. He feels that both co-exist,

and in the presence of the Living Radiance, he seems to sing like the Guru:

> He is the deathless, I have shed fear of death too;
> He ever lives, no pain could haunt me
> He is not poor, nor am I in want;
> He is above pain and so am I
> There is none who could kill us.
> He is the Life of life, the Giver of life
> He is unfettered, free
> I am unfettered, too
> He is unshackled and so am I
> He is all Bliss, and I am full of bliss
> He is carefree, and so am I
> He is unaffected, and so am I
> He is above hunger and thirst,
> And so am I;
> He is free of impurities, and so am I
> He alone is, I am not
> He alone pervades all
> Saith Nanak, God has purged me
> Of all illusions
> He and I have blended,
> I am in union with Him.

> *na oh marta na ham daria*
> *na oh binsai na ham karhia*
> *na oh nirdhan na ham bhukhe*
> *na os dukh na ham kao dukhe*
> *awar na kou maranwara*
> *jio hamara jio denhara-rahao*
> *na os bandhan na ham badhe*
> *na os dhandha na ham dhadhe*
> *na os mail na ham kau maila*
> *os anand ta ham sad kela*
> *na os soch na ham kau socha*
> *na os lep na ham kau pocha*
> *na os bhukh na ham kao trisna*
> *ja oh nirmal ta ham jachna*
> *ham kichh nahi ekai ohi*
> *agi pachhai eko soi*
> *Nanak gur khoi bhram bhanga*

ham oi mil hoi ek ranga

Guru Arjan - Asa.

The God-enlightened soul knows that when the body is shed, the soul will blend with the living light, just as the ray of the Sun reverts to the Sun. At times, such a soul, even in this mortal life, is in union with God. Death does not appear to be a grim terror to him. He views death as a stepping-stone to eternal life:

Death that is others' terror, Is my heart's joy.
Death leads to oneness with the Infinite Soul.

Kabir jis marne te jag darai
mere man anand
marne hi te paiai puran Parmanand

Kabir.

Such a soul welcomes death:

The year and the hour of death are fixed,
The day of death is our wedding-day,
Bless me, friends, so that I should meet my Master
The call is coming; many receive the call every day
That day is coming, remember the Caller always.

sambat saha likhia mil kar pavohu tel
dehu sajan asisaria jio hovai sahib sio mehu
ghar ghar eho pahucha sadrhe nit pavani
sadanhara simriai Nanak se deh avani

Guru Nanak - Gauri.

The blending of the soul with the Infinite Soul, in common parlance, means death, but the man of God enjoys the bliss of union even in human life. Finding salvation in life, he spends himself for the service of others and kindles sparks of life in those in whom the light is feint and feeble. Many lights blaze forth-and when the time comes; his own light blends in the Light of all Lights.

As water blends with water,
So light blends with Light.
The cycle of birth and death ends
I am a sacrifice unto my God.

jio jal mahi jal ai khatana
tio joti sang joti samana
miti gae gavan pae bisram
Nanak prabh kai sad kurban

Guru Arjan - Gauri.

Thus the author of The Elements of Metaphysics says:

> There shines not the sun, nor the moon, nor the stars, neither is there lightning, much less earthly fires.
> After Him, the Shining One, all things shine; by His light is lighted this whole world.

The Light too in a way represents the immanent phase of God who creates the universe. I call this Light Creator (Ishwar). The Transcendent God in His Transcendence is without form or colour, and in the last spiritual stage we know the Transcendent God, and identify ourselves with Him. Human thought and human speech are incapable of describing God in His Transcendental aspect. The ardent devotee intuitively realizes Him, and gradually merges into Him, who is Truth-Knowledge-Bliss, Sat-Chit-Anand.

Here, it would be appropriate to mention that there are two views about Mukti, or salvation. There are those who believe that salvation is a state of no-consciousness, a state in which consciousness is extinct. Others believe that salvation is a state of infinitely enhanced consciousness. The perfect devotee understands both aspects, and knows the inner nature of both.

He is immanent, and He is transcendent
He is thought-free, perfect silence serene
He Himself appears in His creation,
And Himself meditates on Himself.

sargun nirgun Nirankar sun samadhi api
apan kia Nanka ape hi phir jap

Guru Arjan - Gauri, Sukhmani Sahib.

Chapter 13

The All-Pervading One-Pervading All

Climbing to the climax of spiritual advancement, Sri Krishna exclaimed, “I am He.” This is the last stage of Vedantism, too. “Anal Haq,” or “I am the Truth”.“I am God” was the shout of Mansur, and of so many Sufis. On the other hand, Christ, Mohammed, Kabir, and many other great souls said, “Thou art Thou.” The statements, “I am He” and “Thou art Thou” are seemingly contradictory, but, in reality, they are two different ways of stating the same truth.

I hold that both these expressions are incomplete. Both have a snag, and are liable to mislead the spiritual seeker. When the devotee is in union with God, he sees through the inaptness and imperfection of both the statements. At the last stage, there is neither, “I am He,” nor “Thou art Thou,” but something indefinable, ineffable, a sense indescribable, of joy.

Realisation, of Truth is a personal, spiritual experience, whose best description yet would be imperfect. A description could only be possible if and till the describer and the experience described are two separate entities, two distinct things. But when the describer and the experience described blend into each other, and are one, an exact description is not possible. Who will describe whom? All the attributes of Truth that are described are attempts at description, but they fall short of, and lag behind, the crowning peak of Truth. Those attributes could not be a perfect portrayal of Truth. Here are some relevant quotations from the Gurbani on the subject:

He is beyond description,
You could know Him only

If He were a separate entity.

Ta ki gati miti kahi na jai
dusar hoi ta sojhi pai

Guru Arjan - Gauri.

He is beyond any measure.
Since there is no separate
entity to measure Him.

atul kio tolia jai
duja hoi ta sojhi pai

Guru Arjan-Gauri.

None else is, excepting Himself
How then can he be evaluated?

us te duja nahi koi
us di kimat kil u hoi

Guru Ramdas - Bilawal.

"I" and "thou" are relative terms. "I" could be only if there were "thou" or "you" and vice versa, but union is a stage of which the stages of "I" and "thou" fall short. With union, the whole of creation, the whole universe is realized as emanating from, sustained by, and as diverse forms of the One. This stage is distinct from that of "I" and "Thou." The aptest description of this stage would be "All-in-All." or "He Alone."

He is the Teacher, and He is the Learner,
He prevails in everything

ap updesai samjhai api
ape rachia sabh kai sathi

Guru Arjan - Gauri.

He is immanent, pervading all,
He is transcendent, void of form,
He is Silence complete, in Samadhi,
One alone, all-in-all,
He created creation out of Himself.
He meditates on Himself.

sargun nirgun Nirankar
sun samadhi api
apan kia Nanaka ape hi phir jai

Guru Arjan - Gauri.

He is the weighing scale,
He is the weigher,
He sifts and tests the articles
And He Himself is the customer
He is All-in All.

ape kanda tol taraji ape tolanhara
ape dekhai ape bujhai ape hai vanjara

Guru Nanak - Suhi.

The average inquirer, after his study of the Vedanta and adoption of the slogan and catch phrase of "I am He," may go astray. His selfness may be accentuated and intensified. Instead of the extinction of I is sense of self, it may blaze forth. A friend told me that a seeker constantly chanted Sohang, "I am He" so much so that he felt like bursting with ego. He seemed to be on fire, so full was he of restlessness, and he was reported to be fed up with it.

The "I" of Sri Krishna symbolizes the Soul of our soul, the Universal Soul, a truth whose actual realization is by no means easy. If and when the soul realizes the Supreme Soul, then and not till then "I am He" and "Thou alone Art" would mean the same Universal Soul, which is the source of all creation. But before the dawn of this consciousness, the cry of "I am He" would ever lead us astray. Selfness is in us when we begin to seek after God, and little by little the selfness thins away, and after a long process of self-discipline, we attain the stage of perfection.

This cry of "I am He" constantly creates illusions and blocks the path of spiritual progress.

As the philosophy of "I am He" may satisfy one intellectually, but is likely to mislead him spiritually, similarly "Thou art Thou" may mislead a seeker of Truth. He who ardently believes in it, at times begins to believe that he himself is a mere Zero. When you believe yourself to be a zero, the soul and body are inevitably enfeebled, so much so that such a seeker fails to control his body and mind. I have seen many such victims of the illusion, who fancied that they were no more than ciphers. Their self-confidence was at a low ebb; consequently they suffered; their business suffered. Victims of this illusion become indolent and eccentric. To believe that we are nil is as delusive and degenerating as the conceit, "I am He," which tends to fill us with ego. Kabir's views on this point are most illuminating:

> Be thou lowly like a pebble on the roadside,
> Discard all thy pride,
> such a devotee realizes God.
>
> But what if you were a pebble?
> A pebble causes the wayfarer to stumble,
> and causes pain!
>
> Be thou lowly like dust
> Such must be a devotee
>
> What if thou were like unto dust?
> Dust flies about and covers our skins,
> and causes pain.
>
> Be thou like water
> Such must be a servant of God.
>
> What if you were like water?
> Water is so fickle,
> It is hot and cold by turns.
> A servant of God must be like God Himself.

Kabir rorha hoi rahu bat ka taj man ka abhimanu
aisa koi das hoi tahi milai Bhagwan
Kabir rorha hua ta kia bhaia pantihi kau dukhudi
aisa tera das hai jio dharni mahi kheh
Kabir kheh hui tau kia bhaia jan ud lage ang
harijan aisa chahiai jio pani sarbang
Kabir pani hua ta kia bhaia sira tata hoi
harijan aisa chahiai jaisa hari hoi

Kabir - Salokas.

13.1 A Devotee must be like God Himself

God and the servant of God
Are both alike
There is no difference between the two.
As a wave emerges from water
And again merges into it,
So does the soul merge in union with God.

hari harijan dou ek ham
bib vichar kichh nahi
jal te upaj tarang jio
jal hi bikhai samahi

Thanks to Bhai Sahib Vir Singh Ji, who solved my difficulty, when I believed myself to be a cipher. His words were so apt and meaningful "It is not for a true Sikh to be a zero by degrees he must rise to be like God." These words were in consonance with the teachings of Guru Granth and my own intuitive urge. From that day, my devotional adoration of God ever increased, and my spiritual growth was wondrous.

After holding discussions with those who believed, "I am He," and those who said, "Thou art Thou," I have arrived at the following conclusions Both the statements express the same truth-but they do not perfectly or appropriately state the whole truth. For the new spiritual seeker, both the statements may prove misleading. God, or Perfect Truth, is in fact beyond the power of words, but to say "He is All-in-All," is a more appropriate way of stating the truth.

The devotee must always seek refuge in Simran, in Nam. Then his inner consciousness will ever guide and inspire him, according to the exigencies of the various situations, and, in course of time, help him to climb those heavenly heights where he will find all philosophies like so many roads leading to the same Truth. He will own them and respect them all, and then, rising above them all, will realize God, and attain union with Him.

Chapter 14

Relation between Prayer, Simran and Gyan

Relation between According to Hindu philosophy Karma Yog, Prayer, Simran and Gyan. Bhakti Yog and Gyan Yog are the three paths leading to the Realization of Truth. But, in fact, they are not three separate paths or courses- they are one. Good deeds breed love or Bhakti and Bhakti enforces and impels good deeds; similarly Bhakti engenders Gyan and Gyan enforces and invigorates both good deeds and Bhakti. For the sake of study, we make an analysis and describe them separately as three paths, but, in actual practice they overlap each other, and act and re-act on each other, so that they merge into each other and are perceptible as one.

Just as Karma Yog, Bhakti Yog and Gyan Yog are in fact three different aspects or facets of one's life, similarly, prayer, Simran and Gyan are really three different forms of devotion. Prayers intensify Simran, and Simran engenders Gyan, and as Gyan advances, our prayers become purer, more sublime. As the prayers are purified, Simran is enforced, deepened and intensified and this in turn is helpful in attaining subtler Gyan. All the three thus act and re-act on each other and intensify the pace of progress. These three move in a circle and blend and coalesce with one another at all points. Whenever I prayed earnestly, ardently, whole-heartedly out of the depths of my heart and soul, it intensified my Simran, and when Simran progresses, Gyan is engendered in the form of flashes of ideas. Thus they are closely interlinked and raise us to higher spiritual planes.

Prayer Simran, and Gyan, blending with one another, create that blessed state which may well be called Raj Yog. 'Through God's Grace alone, you can take to Raj Yog.' In the state of Raj Yog (Sahej Yog), we become perfect

and all our acts are flawless. The ideal of a true Sikh is to attain to this stage. The true Sikh should be an ideal householder, an ideal Bhagat, and an ideal Gyani. Guru Nanak's ideal was to amalgamate all the old spiritual courses to evolve a perfect, practical way of life. Bhai Gurdas called it "Gadi Rah", or an ideal highway.

Thanks to the Gurus' teachings, there have been countless Sikhs who made a beautiful blend of the flowers of Karma Yog, Bhakti Yog, and Gyan Yog. Ideal Sikhs were model householders, flawless saints, perfect heroes, and detached princes on thrones, like Janak. These Virtues flash and glisten through the lives of all the Sikh Gurus alike.

Mere book reading, hair-splitting, philosophical dissertations, or intellectual gymnastics cannot create an ideal life. It has to be lived. There is one and only one way to attain it, practice Simran, or Nam. This alone can turn men into angels. An ideal life without Nam is out of the question.

The glorious history of the Sikhs was due to their Simran, devotion to God, and their love for the Word without which there cannot be any spiritual progress. At present, there is a conspicuous lack of devotion to God, or Simran, among the Sikhs. Simran releases wondrous forces, if only the devotee is ardent in his devotions, in his Simran. Simran is the alchemy whose touch can work miracles. Through Simran alone can the Sikhs rise to the pinnacle of glory.

Man innately loves pleasure and craves for it. Bliss and pleasure seems to be the breath of his life. Graving for supreme bliss is spontaneously inherent in his mind because pleasures of the flesh do not, and cannot, bring him supreme, unfading, and everlasting bliss, and, consequently, his search for happiness ceases not, ends not.

In quest of happiness, we requisition the services of lust, anger, avarice, infatuation, and conceit. For happiness, we sin and commit such crimes because we wrongly perceive flashes of happiness to result from such vices. Grasping, avaricious people are impelled to seek possession of the good things of the world. They adopt wrong methods to achieve their ends. But, suppose they do succeed, are they satisfied? The craving for more and more, and still more, is indeed insatiable And when the things they crave for, are gained at long last, they find they have earned pain for all their efforts. Avarice has

brought them a luscious, bountiful crop of pain and suffering, and not the unfading happiness for which they yearned.

Similarly, lust and carnal passion seem to be immensely pleasure giving. As a lustful person satisfies his carnal passion, his lust grows, and with its growth, he grows to become a slave of passion, and is enfeebled. If we reflect deeply, we shall see that behind carnal desire, there is the deep-seated, inner craving for supreme bliss and peace. But deluded man goes the wrong way about in quest of bliss and peace, and perceiving a glimpse of it in lust, he is elated, but the pleasure proves illusory.

In the same way, infatuation, or Moh, seems to be pleasure giving. Being unconscious of the source of supreme bliss, we cling to the illusory delights of attachment to worldly objects and will not shed it, even when we are in danger of losing our objects of infatuation. But behind this infatuation too there is the same quest for supreme bliss, and when we fail to find it in the object of our infatuation, we feel miserable and restless.

Anger and ego have behind them the mistaken divine sense of self-esteem or self-respect. Man, the image of God, cannot tolerate disgrace, humiliation, or failure, for in the innermost depths of his being, he loathes these things and yearns to rise above them. But when he misuses this innate sense, and goes astray, he is miserable. He smarts and stews in his own juice and is hoist with his own petard.

A synthesis of lust, anger, avarice, infatuation and self-conceit gives birth to all evils, tangles, muddles and hurdles in the world. Nationalism too is the creation of the combined mixture of avarice, attachment and self-conceit, splitting the world into divisions and hostile camps and turning people of different lands into mortal foes. If we ponder deeply we will find that these five deadly passions are primarily responsible for the birth of the ailments and miseries of humanity. All these five are born of ego. They thrive, so long as ego is there. If and when their ego thins away, they are enfeebled and when the ego swells, they grow too, and if ego dies, they would inevitably die. It is no wonder that in Guru Granth there is not so much of emphasis on the need of killing these passions as on killing ego. Ego is, as it were, the root of evil and sins are its trunk and leaves. If the root is there, sins are there too and if the root is cut down, sin dies with it.

As Simran engenders Gyan, or divine knowledge, the self recedes, and the evils born of If are automatically and effortlessly shed. When the devotee has a glimpse of supreme bliss, and also knows the way to it, then he begins to treat ego and the evils of which it is the mother, as delusive and despicable.

Till we actually taste of supreme bliss, sin is not wholly shed sin in appearance and in actual practice may be shed but it persists in its subtler forms, that is, in evil impulses and cravings within. But it must be borne in mind that for the maintenance of life in our physical frame, ego and its offshoots, are to some extent essential. For this reason, householders (Grahstis) occupy an exalted position according to the Sikh conception of human life. Human passions and feelings must need be properly exercised and employed in the life of a householder, but the ideal ever to be kept in view is that we must rise superior to them, and be purged and purified of them. When the ardent devotee fails to find supreme bliss in animal passion, and finds a glimpse of it in, and through, Simran; he gradually sheds animal passion, and takes to Simran, heart and soul.

14.1 How can we be rid of evil?

The First Method We cannot be rid of evil by waging war with it. That way leads to despair and disappointment. An unintelligent, blind strife with animal passions is tantamount to swimming against the current. To be rid of them, we must first probe their origin. We must understand the underlying philosophy. These animal passions were ordained by God Himself. Their proper use is not detrimental; in fact, they can help us to realize God.

The Second Method We must not, in thought, magnify the might of animal passions, and become defeatists. As the image of God, and endowed with divine powers, man is mightier than these. Victory would first be mental, in the mind of the devotee, who would actualise it as the next inevitable step. By shedding defeatism and by developing inner strength, the devotee is in a superior position in the fight. Simran and prayers are mighty and irresistible aids. A psychological process thus wins half the fight.

The Third Way The third way to be rid of evil is the intelligent approach to Gurbani and resort to Simran. As we glimpse supreme bliss through Simran, all our mental ills, illusory pleasures, false values, evil impulses begin to recede. I look upon Simran as the panacea for all ills of the world. Nam is the panacea for all earthly ills, *Sarab rog ka aukhadh Nam* (Guru Arjan).

Till we attain Supreme Bliss, we must strive, heart and soul, to pursue the objective; we must hate evil from the core of our heart and resolve to conquer it.

We must not love evil. If we do so, we put ourselves in its tight grip, and then the attainment of supreme bliss is out of the question. We must not make too much of evil, for if we do so, we magnify and glorify it, and then the task of purification becomes proportionately more arduous. We must ever move upward mentally and steadily walk on the path to perfect bliss.

> All the pleasures of the world
> will not bring satiation or contentment.
> Taste thou the Supreme bliss
> which shall bring you abiding peace and contentment.

> *an rasa jete tai chakhe*
> *nimakh na trisna teri lathe*
> *hari ras ka tu chakhah sad*
> *chakhat hoi raheh bismad*

Guru Arjan - Gauri-Guareri.

14.2 Sickness

For Simran, (meditation) health of body and mind is essential. For meditation our mind needs to be ever alert. For this very reason, in the Sikh daily prayer, there is a fervent entreaty for sound health.

Disease makes us miserable, for it directly affects the body, and, therefore, we view it with dread.

Although doctors are ever on the increase, and there are thousands of drugs on the market, and the number of hospitals is large enough, it is amazing that disease is appearing in newer forms. There are now certain complicated diseases of which our ancestors had never dreamt. Healthy people are extremely rare. Doctor John Fames, who was surgeon-physician to King William IV of England, writes:

> "I declare my conscientious opinion, founded on long observation
> and reflection that if there were not a single physician, surgeon,

> midwife, chemist, druggist or drug on the face of the earth, there would be less sickness and less mortality."

Physicians in Europe and America have, after much experiment, found that before disease appears in the body, it first takes grip of the mind. When the mind is affected, the body becomes diseased. For instance, if a weak-minded man, while sweating profusely, is suddenly exposed to the cold, it sets him thinking that he must catch chill. This thought recurs to him again and again, till there is ague or fever in his fancy, and lo, he begins to shiver and fever is on him Disease grows in this fashion: the mind is affected first, and the body is affected thereafter.

Dr. Alexander Cannon, M.D. writes:

> "By imagining a disease, which a man has not got, a man may so disturb his vegetative phenomena that in time he will not only suffer from that disease but may actually die of it."

Just as a diseased mind causes a diseased body, similarly when the mind is healthy, the body grows healthy, too. It is a common experience that as soon as a doctor arrives, the patient is heartened and begins to feel better. The underlying reason is that in view of the patient's faith in the doctor, and the doctor's heartening words, the patient's mind feels invigorated, and when the mind is invigorated, there is relief from disease. The fear of disease causes disease and fearlessness produces immunity from it.

When plague and cholera are raging in an epidemic form, stouthearted people can be seen serving the patients, carrying the dead to the cremation ground, and yet they remain unaffected. On the other hand, there are the faint-hearted, who through their fear, court disease.

To escape disease, or to fight it, our forefathers used a spiritual device that is now in vogue in the West. This efficacious remedy, in the words of Guru Arjan, is:

> Nam is the panacea for all ills.
> *Sarab rog ka aukhad nam*

Guru Arjan- Gauri Sukhmani

If and when drugs bring relief, we become dependent on them. But if the spiritual device cures a patient, he sheds his fear of disease and is cured permanently. Through his spiritual progress, he helps to cure others.

Spiritual seekers are well aware of the fact that the body as such is devoid of life, it is inanimate, cannot move of itself, nor feel anything. Just as a chair or a table cannot catch fever, similarly the body, which is like a chair or a table in its want of life, should be incapable of catching fever. Another fact, which the spiritual seeker is well aware of, is that the soul remains unaffected and is not subject to disease or death. This means that the mind alone can be affected by disease. Anything created by thought exists in thought or fancy. To the spiritual researcher, therefore, disease has no meaning. God abides in us, in every atom and molecule of our body, as such disease should impossible. There must be no fear of disease.

Spiritually enlightened people know how to attune themselves to the Infinite, and being in touch with the inexhaustible, treasure-house of force, they draw strength according to their needs, and do not stand in need of any external agency for the sustenance of their life and health. Even some of those who are not spiritually enlightened, but are endowed with some knowledge about God, through their study of religious books, have been found to cure diseases through God's grace. I have written a book, *Health Through Nam* (in Punjabi), wherein I have dealt with this topic in detail.

Prayer works wonders. "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of."

The devotee should help to cure patients through prayer and *Simran.* This will strengthen his faith and enable him to serve humanity in the best way. I believe that the very touch of a man of *Simran* could drive away disease. The perfect devotee is like the proverbial philospher's stone, and those who are within the orbit and aura of his potent influence are healthy and happy.

It is not un-Sikh-like to cure disease through prayer and *Simran.* In the *Guru Granth* there are many hymns of the Fifth Guru wherein the great Guru chanted his prayers for the recovery of his son, Hargobind, and when he was cured there were thanksgiving hymns.

14.3 The Serpent's Tail

If the serpent's head is crushed, it becomes incapable of biting nor can its venom be dangerous. But the tail keeps moving, even when the head is crushed, and fills many people with fear. This is true of our mind as well. Even when the lower mind is dead, the old evil propensities and vicious tendencies remain alive, like the tail of the dead serpent, and we are afraid of their threat to our well being. The inexperienced devotee has then his moments of dejection and despair, as to why even after attaining perfection after sustained efforts the mind should still persist in its instability? Mahatma Gandhi writes in his autobiography, *My Experiments With Truth*:

> "Not that the will or the effort is lacking but it is yet a problem to me wherefrom undesirable thoughts spring their insidious invasion."

The immature devotee, under the circumstances, gets frustrated and starts doubting his achievements. I would strongly urge upon the seekers of Truth not to give way to such despondency and to meet the situation with faith and determination. We must remember that such fickle mindedness in us cannot withstand fortitude, patience, and firm resolve. My inner voice has ever been my saviour, and I have always gained heart from it. In moments of despair, we must seek refuge in Simran and in devout prayer, but we must not be impatient.

> You are dyed gradually in God's own dye,
> You become God-like,
> And you shed your illusions,
> But all this in God's own good time.

> *rang lagat lagat lagat hai*
> *bhao bhagat bhagat bhagat hai*

Lifelong, and deep-seated evil propensities and vicious tendencies must take time to be stamped out. There are times when seekers are prone to take an exaggerated view of their weaknesses, and they view them as something colossal and frightful. Such a view is unfair. The seekers must be fair to others as well as to themselves. We must not underrate our own achievements. We must have complete confidence in our victory. We must not be despondent, nor must we indulge in self-pity. Self-pity weakens our mind. But experience is a great friend. The experienced devotee is not subject to

fits of defeatism; he views the evil tendencies of the mind and the consequent tug-of-war with the higher self with rather unconcerned amusement, for he knows that the serpent's head, or the head of evil, has been crushed, and what remains of the evil tendencies of the mind is like the moving tail of the dead serpent, which can do him no harm. It is only a natural psychological phenomenon.

If a wheel is rolled with sufficient force, it will keep rolling on and on till it loses momentum and then automatically it comes to a dead stop. With the acquisition of divine knowledge, our lower mind-that is to say, evil impulses, tendencies and passions-cease to get sustenance. The restless waves of the mind come to a stop, but like a gramophone record, so long as the recorded impressions are not entirely obliterated, our evil impulses do come to the surface now and then.

14.4 The Parental Home and The Husband's Home

The woman's life may be divided into three phases: life in the parental home, life partly spent in the parental home and partly in her husband's home in turns, for brief spells; and life in the husband's home.

A girl is born in her parental home, where she grows up, and learns how to lead her life wisely and well in her parents' home. The period of life spent in the parental home is essentially a preparation for life in the husband's home. When a girl is married and goes to her husband's home, she finds things strange there. Her husband's kith and kin present strange and unfamiliar faces, and the girl yearns for her parental home. This is why our sensible forefathers devised a particular plan to make the husband's home lovable to a married girl-after marriage the girl goes to her parental home at intervals that lengthen with the progress of married life. Thus the girl gets used to her husband's home, and tends to forget her parental home. There is a common saying, "Daughters cannot be absorbed in parental homes, their real home is their husband's home." Efforts are made to facilitate the transition from the parental home to that of the husband.

Then comes a stage when the girl regards her husband's home as her own. She visits her parental home for a while as a guest, on special occasions.

The devotee of God, too, passes through three such stages. He treats his environment in the midst of which he is born, grows up and becomes an adult, as a girl treats her parental home, and prepares for heavenly regions of the spirit.

Remember thy Heavenly Spouse in thy parental home
And learn good manners under the guidance of the Guru
Then shalt thou be happy in thy husband's home,
All of us must go to our Husband's home,
Blessed is the married woman who loves her Spouse.

peiarhe saho sev tu sahurde sukh vas
gurmil chaj achar sikh tudh kade na lagai dukh
sabhna sahore vanjna sabh muklavan har
Nanak dhan sohagini jin sah nal piar.

Guru Arjan - Sri Rag.

This preparation begins for the devotee from the day he listens to and reads the praises of his Lord God in the Guru Granth, or from the lips of saintly souls. As he prepares to meet his Lord, his attachment to the fleeting, evanescent carnal pleasures, of this world diminishes. Like the unmarried maiden he pictures to himself in his fancy the home of the Heavenly Spouse, and when his yearning to meet His Lord and Master rises in tempo and reaches its climax, he sheds his selfhood and glimpses the celestial floodlight. He finds bubbling through himself the Heavenly thrill and touch and finds God's abiding presence with him.

Like perfume in flowers
Like the reflection in the looking, glass.

puhap madh jio bas basat hai
mukar mahi jaise chhai

Guru Tegh Bahadur - Dhanasri.

Just as there is no barrier between the wife and the husband, so is there no wall between the devotee and God:

God is one with His devotees through and through,
The curtain between the devotee and God goes.

ot poti milio bhagtan kao
jan sio parda lahio

Guru Arjan - Kanrha.

14.5 Honest Doubts

While seeking truth, honest doubts do arise in our minds. This is natural and inevitable. These doubts have to be resolved, as unresolved doubts pose serious impediments to gain attunement with God in Simran. Debate and discussion for its own sake leads nowhere and is reprehensible, but honest doubts demand satisfactory answers. We must not rest till these are resolved. At onetime, certain writings in the sacred Guru Granth raised doubts in my mind and were beyond my grasp. For instance, there are the verses:

This world is like a mountain of smoke,
But you think it to be everlasting and real.

eho jag dhuen ka pahar
tai sachi mania kah bichar

Guru Tegh Bahadur - Basant.

Nothing is born, nothing dies.
He Himself appears in a multitude of roles.

nahi kichh janmai nah kichh marai
apan chalit ap hi karai

Guru Arjan - Gauri.

There was nobody to resolve my doubts, and I was much depressed. At times, I sought the help of missionaries, professional speakers, and Gyanis, but I found that they were strangers to Simran, were by no means in an advanced spiritual stage, and were, therefore, incapable of resolving my doubts. I, therefore, approached God only through prayer, and watched and waited for an answer. My method of research has been to study Gurbani with faith and due reverence, to pray humbly for its correct understanding and guidance and honestly to stick answers to my doubts until these were thoroughly resolved to my satisfaction.

As a matter of fact, doubts are best answered from within ourselves. But we must remember that the spirit within us though quite competent is not bound to answer our questions at our bidding. It takes its own time. There are certain things, which are answered fairly promptly; there are others that take months and years to be answered. There is nothing certain or definite about the working of the spirit in these matters. To remove our doubts and to achieve Divine Guidance the golden principle is to continue in our prayers, and wait patiently for an answer. At times there is an appropriate answer from within, though we fail to grasp its full meaning. But if we continue in our prayers, its full sense is brought home to us in diverse ways. At times by His grace we come across good souls, books, magazines, and we find satisfactory answers through them. I believe there are certain doubts, to resolve which further spiritual progress is essential. Sometimes, the spiritual seeker cannot understand the inner nature of these things and he grows impatient. Impatience is reprehensible. God Himself looks to our spiritual needs and satisfies them, when the time is ripe. Of course, the spiritual seeker himself is not the best judge regarding the time and the measure of satisfaction from the answer to his doubts. We must remember:

> God is eternal,
> Our labour is never without its fruit.

As required by this verse, we must have full faith in God and in His perfect justice and grace, and we must go on fearlessly in our quest of truth. Impatience for an answer is obviously wrong. Our duty is to offer sincere prayers, to be steadfast in devotion, and to wait for an answer with patience. In fact it is not up to the devotee only to get his misgivings removed, it is God Himself who takes upon himself to remove all doubts of the devotee. God blesses us with the necessary promptings, urgings, and inspiration, but all this takes place in God's own time.

14.6 God's Grace

The Sacred Granth and saintly souls constantly emphasize that God cannot be realized through mere devotion, meditation, self-effort, cleverness, ritualism, austerities, or Tapas, or even merely through Simran, and that God can be realized only through His own Grace.

> Meditation, austerities, routine recitation of the Word,
> Purificatory ritual and self-discipline

these alone will not save you.

jap tap nem such sanjam
nahi in bidhe chhutkar

Guru Arjan - Kanrha.

Mere self-effort and devotion
Will not carry you to God
He will spring a surprise upon you,
And meet you when you expect it not.

ghal na milio sev na milio
milio ai achinta

Guru Arjan - Dhanasri.

He has no form, no mark, no colour,
He is devoid of Rajas, Tamas, Satva,
He alone knows Him
On whom descends His Grace.

rup na rekh na rang kichh
triho gun te prabh bhin
tisah bujhae Nanka
jis hovai so parsan

Guru Arjan - Gauri.

The spiritual seeker will naturally ask, "If devotion, Simran, adoration, and self-effort cannot lead one to God, where is the use of these things, for He will come only when and if it pleases Him?" To deduce this conclusion and to discard devotion, or Simran, would be suicidal. If we read the entire text of Gurbani carefully and intelligently in its proper perspective, we find that what is condemned is not Simran, or devotion as such, but only pride-laden Simran, of which the devotee feels conceited. The element of self-love, accompanying Simran, is what is condemned. To kill self-love would lead to the consummation and crowning glory of Simran, and if Simran engenders pride, it would in itself be a hindrance to spiritual growth. The Gurbani does not at all imply or signify that devotion, or Simran, in its pure form is fruitless and unnecessary, for we so frequently come across verses, which tell us:

Let us be up, friend, And do our bit
To meet our Spouse, the Lord God.

Sun sakhie niji udam kareha
manai laihe hari kantai

Guru Arjan - Gauri.

I have pondered deeply and long,
There is no escape except through Simran.

sodhat sodhat sodh bichara
bin hari bhajan nahi chhutkara

Guru Arjan - Gauri.

God is eternal-and lives ever and ever,
Devotion to Him is never fruitless.

Nanak prabh abinasi
taki sev na birthi jasi

Guru Arjan - Sorath.

If you toil and moil for Him, He will not disappoint you
Or ignore your labour.

ik til nahi bhanai ghalai

God is perfectly just,
He protects His servants.

pura niao kare kartar
apne das kau rakhanhar

Guru Arjan - Gauri.

The Guru Granth positively and emphatically tells us that God is perfectly just, and is never oblivious or neglectful of any one's sincere efforts. No, we get our full reward for them. Thus, Bhai Gurdas says,

> If you walk one step towards God
> God advances hundreds of steps to welcome you.

> *charan Saran guru ek painda jae chal*
> *satguru kot painda age hoi let hai*

His grace manifests itself when we purge ourselves of self or pride, and take to Simran, or adoration, with our whole heart. Simran in the light of Gurbani is the service, most pleasing and acceptable to God, through which God's Grace descends upon us. This truth has been proclaimed by gurus, prophets, sages, and our forbears, and has stood the test of time. The spiritual researcher has certainly every right to try it for himself. But he must try it honestly. Just as two and two make four and there could be not the least doubt about it, so am I positively sure that if only we serve and adore God humbly and with full faith in Him, through Simran, His grace must appear.

I hold that God's grace is essential not only for our spiritual advancement, but also for our success in all walks of life. There is always a gulf between our efforts and the crown of success, and God's grace alone can bridge this gulf. Success attends our efforts, if and when God's grace descends on us. That is the secret of success. I am not aware of instances when people who were full of pride and conceit achieved success. And even if seeming success is achieved, it is only ephemeral.

If we take to Simran in a humble spirit, God's grace begins to appear in diverse shapes and forms. Here are some of the forms in which God's grace descends on us.

We begin to love Simran, so that Simran is blissful to us. While engaged in Simran, our doubts are set at rest, and we love Simran still more. We meet seekers of Truth, and we feel an aversion to self-centred people. We are blessed with the inspiration and guidance of high-souled people. We light upon books, which dispel our doubts and hazy notions. Our faith grows firm, our doubts are dispelled. The soul is illumined, we begin to know ourselves, there are glimpses of the Infinite, and we clearly grasp the truth that we are intimately interconnected with God.

14.7 The Bugbear

When a child is up to mischief, the mother frightens him with stories of bugbears. But if the child improves, and yet is scared by the thought of the bugbear, the mother, in order to make the child shed his fear, tells him that the bugbear does not exist at all, and that she created the illusion to wean him away from mischief and she encouragingly holds the child and leads him through the dark to help him shed his fear.

Similarly, in the Guru Granth, in order to wean away man from illusory pleasures of life and to pull him out of the morass of worldliness, there have been held out terrors of death, of the pangs of old age, and so forth, so that we should shed our self, with its attendant evils. The miseries of life, the loss of friends, disease and death, fill us with fear and despondency. These earthly ills have been portrayed with remarkable skill and effect in the Guru Granth, as also in other religious books, to wean us from worldliness and to lead us to renunciation and selflessness.

Kabir, the bones burn like firewood,
The hair burns like grass I
Kabir saw the world on fire
And felt sad.

Kabir had jare jio lakri,
kes jare jeo ghas
Eh jag jarta dekh kai bhaio Kabir udas.

Kabir.

You looked upon the body as your own,
You looked upon hearth and home and wife as yours,
It is all illusory, you own nothing,
Ponder carefully, nothing is yours.

jo tan lain apno kar manio
ar sundar ghar nari
in mai kachh tero re nahin
dekhoh sochi bichari

Guru Tegh Bahadar - Gauri.

The wife you love so fondly,
The wife who hangs on to you so lovingly,
When the Soul leaves the body,
That very wife flees from you crying, "Ghost, ghost!"

ghar ki nar bahut hit ja sio
sada rahat sang lagi
jab hi hans taji eh kaya
pret pret kar bhagi

Guru Tegh Bahadur - Sorath.

What is born will perish,
Death may come to day or tomorrow,
Shed thy entanglements
And sing God's praises.

jo upjio so binas hai
paro aj kai kal
Nanak hari gun gai le
chhad sagal janjal

Guru Tegh Bahadur.

Ram of Ayodhya is gone, Ravan is gone
Nothing abides, nothing lasts for ever,
The world is but an empty dream.

Ram gaio Ravan gaio jakao baho parwar
kaho Nanak thir kichh nahi
supne jio sansar

Guru Tegh Bahadur - Salokas.

The eyes that bewitched the world
The eyes that could not stand the strain
Of the collyrium-stick.
Oh! those eyes-the birds latch in those sockets.

Farida jin loin jag
Mohia se loin mai dith
Kajal rekh na sadhia
se pankhi sue bahith

Sheikh Farid.

But when we shed our worldliness and our self, and walk on the path to Truth, the Gurbani begins to purge us of the terrors of disease, and death, pain and grief and sets us on the path leading upward and we find the healing balm in the words of the Guru.

Hot blasts of air will blow not over you,
If only you cling to the feet of God.
Round us are God's rampart walls,
No pain will approach us.
I adore the true Lord
Who is the author of all creation.
Nam is the panacea for all ills,
I love One and only One,
The Saviour has saved me,
All my troubles and woes are at an end
God has been gracious,
His grace has descended on me.

Tati vao na lagai Parbrahm sarnai
chaugird hamare ram kar dukh lagai na bhai
satgur pura bhetia jini banat banai
Ram nam aukhadh dia eka liv lai-rahao
rakh lie tin rakhanhar sabh biadh mitai
kaho Nanak kirpa bhai prabh bhai sarnai

Guru Arjan - Bilawal.

Sitting and standing, happy am I,
Fear hovers not over me,
I am blessed with Light Divine.
The Lord is my Saviour;
He knows the secrets of all hearts.
Carefree, I rise
Carefree, I go to bed
Thou, 0 Lord, art Omnipresent,
Happy am I at home and abroad,
Saith Nanak, I ever chant His Name.

uthat sukhia baithat sukhia
bhau nahi lage ja aise bujhai
rakha ek hamara suami

sagal ghata ka antarjami-rahao
soi achinta jage achinta
jaha kaha prabh ta vartanta
ghar sukh vasia bahar sukh paia
kaho Nanak gur mantar dirhaia

Guru Arjan - Bhairo.

His devotee is blissful ever,
His devotee perishes not,
His devotee is free of fear,
His devotee ever triumphs.

ja kai bhagat anand mai
ja kai bhagat kao nahi khai
ja kai bhagat kao nahi bhai
ja kai bhagat kao sada jai

Guru Arjan - Basant.

When the spiritual seeker has firm faith in God, the Gurbani leads to Light Divine. He begins to grasp subtle truths. As a mother tells her reformed child, "There is no such thing as a bugbear, it is only an invention," similarly the Gurbani imparts the light:

> Pain, disease and death are naught; they are only terrors to turn us to God. The soul remains unaffected and is not subject to pain, nor is it subject to death, disease, old age, destitution, fear, and feebleness. He feels it all through his ignorance. There is neither birth nor death; it is all His sport, His play.

Thou art I, I am Thou
No gulf between Thee and me,
The soul and God are
Like gold and gold ornaments,
Like the water and the waves of water.

tohi mohi mohi tohi antar kaisa
kanak katak jal tarang jaisa

Guru Ramdas - Sri Rag.

A King went to sleep on his throne,
And dreamed that he was a beggar
He was miserable over the loss of his Kingdom,
And yet it was all a dream
So do we react in the world.

narpat ek singhasan soia supne bhaia bhikhari
achhat raj bichharat dukh paia so gat bhai hamari

Guru Ramdas - Sorath.

He who is God-centred
Grows not old.
gurmukh budhe kade nahi

Guru Amardas - Saloka.

I love the Name of God,
The myrmidons of death flee in shame.

Ram nam man laga
Jam lajai kar bhaga

Guru Arjan - Sorath.

I dived into the innermost depths within myself
No one is born, no one dies,
I proclaim it from the housetops.

kaia baho khand khojte navnidh pai na kichh aibo na kichh jaibo
Ram ki duhai

Bhagat Pipa - Dhanaasri.

My home is
Where there is neither birth nor death nor old age.

Nanak badha ghar taha
jithai mirat na janam jara

Guru Arjan - Sri Rag.

14.8 Guru Or Spiritual Teacher

I hold that God Almighty is really the original Guru. Strictly speaking, God alone can be called the Guru. God alone is guiding and inspiring the whole universe, according to the circumstances and needs of each one of us. The latent inspiration of this all-pervading Power is at the back of our feelings, our thoughts, our actions, and our experience.

God does what He wills
And all beings act accordingly.
jo hari lorhe so kare soi jia karan

Guru Arjan - Majh.

All beings were created by thee,
Thou hast moulded them all according to Thy will.

jia jant sabh tudh upae
jit jit bhana tit tit lae

Guru Arjan - Majh.

The sacred Granth makes this truth crystal-clear. It is God who inspires us with virtuous emotions and feelings; it is God who guides us all according to our needs and our special state of development; it is God who bestows on us a spiritual teacher; it is God who inspires us to perform Simran and prayers; it is God who blesses us with divine knowledge in His own good time. A spiritual teacher, or Guru, proves a means of our union with God, but it is God who makes the means available to us. At every step on the path to God, it is God who inspires and helps us.

By His Grace, God blesses us
With a spiritual teacher, with understanding,
And with divine knowledge.

kar kirpa Gobind dia gur gian budh bibek

Guru Nanak - Asa.

Those who are blessed with God's Grace
Find a spiritual teacher.

jina mastak dhur hari likhai
tina satgur milia ram raje

Guru Ramdas - Asa.

Those blessed by God find the Guru
jini kao purab likhia tine satguru miliai

Guru Amardas - Sri Rag.

If Thou blessest us with Thy Grace,
We find the true spiritual teacher.

nadar kareh je apni ta nadri satgur paia

Guru Amardas - Saloka.

God Himself is the spiritual teacher,
By His Grace and by His Will we meet the teacher
God is the life of life
God is the universe
He dwells in all
As water mixes with water.

ape satgur api hari ape mel milai
api daya kar melsi gur satgur pichat pai
sabh jagji van ap hai Nanak jal jalah samai

Guru Ramdas-Sri Rag.

I am astonished that in all societies, in all religions, the prophet, the Guru, the Avtar is more honoured and adored than God Himself! The chief reason and main explanation for it must be this, that the masses cannot easily conceive of the Transcendental, Deathless, Unborn, Fearless, Maliceless God, who is Existence, Knowledge, Bliss, and so the sagacious leaders of people for the good of the masses in general hold aloft the transcendental adoration of prophets and Avtars, on account of their lofty ideas. They think that by doing so, they can turn the thoughts of the masses to God ultimately.

There stand before me God and my Guru,
Whose feet must I touch in adoration?
I am a sacrifice unto my Guru
Who has united me with God.

gur Gobind dono kharhe kis ke lagun pai
balhari gur apne jin Gobind dia milai

Most people whose inner eye is not opened, who cannot conceive of subtle truths and can only put their faith in concrete, tangible, visible objects-people such as these are referred to in this verse to fortify their faith in the Guru or spiritual teacher and his great sayings. But the God-enlightened soul, whose inner eye is opened through Simran and who grasps the inner working of God's ways, finds God as the source of everything.

Guru Gobind Singh's immortal motto should be ever, ever borne in mind:

In the beginning and in the end,
God alone was and is the Avtar;
I bow to Him alone,
He alone is our Guru,
He it is who guides all humanity.

adi ant ekai avtara
soi guru samjhioh hamara
namaskar tiski ho hamari
sakal praja jin api savari

Guru Gobind Singh.

Guru Nanak himself called God his Guru.

I have consulted with my Guru,
I have no other refuge.

mai apna gur puchh dekhia avar nahi thao

Guru Nanak - Sri Rag.

Every Sikh and all created beings have their eternal Guru in God Almighty Himself. We often deviate from this lofty ideal, and consequently instead of adoring the transcendental God, stoop to man-worship, and forget the true path of devotion and the true path of Sikhism.

Next to God, I treat the Word of Guru Nanak, of Guru Nanak's successors and of the Bhagat's as incorporated in the Guru Granth, as the Guru, or spiritual teacher. The Guru Granth is my invaluable heritage. This conviction has ever sustained me and saved me from going astray and stumbling.

No doubt, I stumbled in my spiritual journey and the pace of my spiritual progress has at times been very slow, but the Gurbani is not to blame for this shortcoming. My own weaknesses, inertia, and carelessness were responsible. This is not to say that I desisted from profiting by the teachings of non-Sikh sacred books and spiritually advanced mahatmas, on the other hand I derived great benefit from such holy associations. But Guru Nanak's teachings have been the pivot of my faith.

I have accepted from others what was in accord with Guru Nanak's teachings, and rejected what was at variance with them. A comparative study of religion has confirmed my faith and resolved my doubts. Now I hold that all sacred books and the teachings of spiritually advanced people are potent enough to lead a conscientious seeker of Truth. If only they honestly strive to understand and act upon their faiths, Hindus, Muslims, all can attain self-perfection and peace. If only we are humble, conscientious and honest in the pursuit of Truth we can attain Truth, no matter what faith or spiritual leader we owe allegiance to.

To my devotions and endeavours I give the third place in guiding me spiritually. While walking on the spiritual path, there are times and seasons when gloom encircles and envelops us and pessimism and despondency overwhelm us. The spiritual seeker ceases to find inspiration and guidance from any source and faith, and striving alone, the staff of faith helps him grope his way through the enveloping darkness. Even though the will to strive and toil comes from God, yet in the initial spiritual stages we do not grasp this mystery and we have to depend on our striving and efforts.

The teachings of a spiritual teacher are of no avail, so long as we do not follow them. The spiritual seeker must seek refuge in faith, in Simran, and in spiritual striving. As a soldier trained in the art and science of warfare is helpless without his arms and weapons, so a man to whom fine spiritual teaching is available, may derive no benefit, if he lacks faith and conscientious striving. Side by side with our prayers for meeting a perfect spiritual teacher, we must pray for strength and perseverance to live according to the teachings of the spiritual guide. The spiritual progress of many people remains blocked for want of earnest striving. Merely knowing the way will not carry us to our destination. We must walk and tread that way to reach the end of the journey. Bhai Gurdas has well said:

> Merely to make inquiries about the road,
> Without our treading it,

Cannot take us to our Lord's land.
To make inquiries about medical cures
Without using the medicines
With proper precautions
Will not rid us of disease.
To make inquiries about the ways of chaste wives,
And to act like unchaste women,
To cherish pollution within the heart,
This is not the way to the cherished goal.
To sing, to listen to God's Word,
To close our eyes hypocritically,
Will not lead us to perfection
Unless we live the teachings of the spiritual guide.

puchhat pathak tah marag na dharai pag
pritam kai des kaise batan so jaiai
puchhat hai vaid khat aukhadh na sanjam se
kaise mitai rog sukh sahaj samaiai
puchhat suhagan karam hai duhagan ke
ride vibhcar kat sehja bulaiai
gae sune ankhe miche paiai na parampad
gur updes jao lao kamaiai

Bhai Gurdas.

To strive, to toil and then to have faith in God's Grace is one thing, to do nothing and yet to expect God's Grace is entirely different. Those who would actually do nothing and yet expect Grace are as a rule slothful shirkers. The sun gives warmth and light to those who bask in the sun. Water will wash the impurities of only those who bathe in it. Similarly, God's Grace descends on those who strive whole-heartedly to earn His Grace.

Chapter 15

Weakness

There is no one without imperfections. For these imperfections, there is the cycle of birth and death. Omar Khayyam says:

> Is there one free of sin?
> Was there a mortal Who lived and sinned not?
>
> *nil karda gunah dar jahan kist bago*
> *an kas ke na karda gunah chu zist bago*

In the Guru Granth, the same thought recurs again and again:

> Lord, how can the earthly mortal be clean?
> Sin is the lot of humans.
>
> *mati ka kia dhopai suami*
> *manas ki gat ehi*

Guru Arjan - Ramkali.

> All are subject to error, God alone errs not.
>
> *bhulan vich kia sabh koi*
> *karta ap na bhulai*

Guru Nanak - Parbhati.

Imperfections, or weakness, are part of human nature but victory over self, purging us of these weaknesses is admittedly the end and aim of human life. The cycle of birth and death goes on. Why? Because of our imperfections and to triumph over our weaknesses. Just as a diseased man is taken to hospital and a healthy man does not have to be taken there, similarly the perfectly purified soul is above and beyond the cycle of birth and death.

For our weaknesses we are immured within the four walls of our flesh frames. Now, how can we be free? The first and foremost essential to attain freedom of the spirit is that we must be aware of our weaknesses. The diseased man who does not know that he is diseased cannot be expected to seek proper treatment to rid himself of his disease. Similarly, if we are unaware of our imperfections, no thought of rising above them can possibly arise in us.

Our inner voice, if only we heed it, warns us of our faults and foibles. God has blessed us with the best of friends our conscience for the successful pilgrimage of this world. But just as a friend whom we always slight and insult and act contrary to his advice, ultimately ceases to counsel us, so if we turn a deaf ear to our conscience and act in opposition to its voice, it ultimately ceases to advise us.

Unfortunate indeed is the person whose conscience is in sheer despair, has become silent. He becomes like a motorcar whose brakes have been detached. Little wonder, if such a person has to face accidents, tangles, embarrassments, and failures. To gain victory over weaknesses, hard struggle is a must.

Now a days, there is a tendency among the intelligentsia to justify their foibles and weaknesses. This is a dangerous lapse and may prove ruinous.

When we are perfectly aware of our own weaknesses, we cease to find fault with others, and are not, censorious. In fact, we look on ourselves as the worst of all.

> We are the worst of beings,
> Others are better by far than I,
> He who thinks like this,
> Is indeed my friend.

Kabira sabh se ham bure
ham taj bhalo sabh koi
jini aisa kar bujhai
mit hamara soi.

Kabir.

When I knew not myself,
I found fault with others;
And when I knew my own faults,
There was none so bad as I.

na thi hal se jab hamen apne khabar
rahe dekhte ghairon ke aibo hunar
parhi apni buraion pe jo nazar
nazron men koi bura na raha

Zafar.

Chapter 16

Guru Worship

The Guru must be adored or idolized to earn his goodwill. But if we adore the Guru to please ourselves and not the Guru, surely we are undeserving of the Guru's goodwill and pleasure.

The first and foremost duty of a Sikh is to first out how the Guru's goodwill or pleasure can be earned. The true Sikh is a true lover and whatever he does out of love is done to please his beloved, not to please himself. The first essential of true love is that we subordinate our own pleasure to that of the person whom we love and adore. To resign our will to the will of the beloved is the basic principle. The true seeker is on the right path only when he follows this golden principle otherwise his efforts will be useless.

Spiritual seekers must know that the consummation or perfection or devotion or perfect love lies in the extinction of self and in union with God. The adoration of the spiritual teacher helps in destroying self and in the attainment of oneness with God. Therefore, the Grace of God is said to be dependent on Guru's pleasure and kindness.

We generally find that most Sikhs adore the Guru simply for their own satisfaction and not to win the goodwill of the Guru. The question is, how can we tell when and how we enjoy the Guru's goodwill, and what in fact in the essence of his goodwill? For an answer to this question, I would refer readers to the sacred Granth, which unfolds all spiritual secrets unreservedly. Those who wish to understand the Guru's mind must read the Guru Granth with the utmost care and thought.

The seeker, after an earnest study of the Guru Granth, would be startled to find that the Guru's pleasure lies not in being idolized or worshipped. The Guru wants us to mould ourselves on his pattern, and to make ourselves his inheritors and successors. We should understand the Guru and live according to his teachings:

> Sikhism lies in pondering the Guru's teachings.
> *sikhi sikhia gur vichar*

The Guru loves and adores the disciple who understands his teachings, and lives in accordance with them. The true Guru loves to bestow all his precious belongings to the true disciple. His greatest delight consists in giving away the innermost spiritual secrets, all the divine knowledge that he possesses, with his heartiest blessing. The Guru himself is above imperfections and want and is fully conversant with all spiritual secrets and is in fact in atonement with God and he is keen to mould his Sikh in his image.

> The Khalsa is my own image,
> I reside in the Khalsa.
>
> *khalsa mero rup hai khas*
> *khalse mahe hamkaro nivas*

Guru Gobind Singb.

> The devotee of God is like unto God;
> You will find no difference between the two.
>
> *Hari ka sevak so hari jeha*
> *bhed na janoh manas deha*

Guru Arjan.

Chapter 17

Apparent Contradictions in Gurbani

On the one hand, the Gurus hold that whatever happens in the world is under Divine dispensation and that His will is supreme.

> He is the first cause and sole author,
> Nanak says repeat God's name again and again.
>
> *karan karavan ape ap*
> *sada sada Nanak hari jap*

Guru Arjan - Gauri.

It would thus appear that the doer of the act and the prompter, or inspirer, of the act is one and the same - God.

> God does what He wills
> Humans act as He wills.
>
> *marai rakhai ekai ap*
> *manukh kai kichh nahi hath*

Guru Arjan - Gauri.

> Thus things happen as God wills and humans do what God inspires them to do *jo hari lorhe so kare soi jia karan*

Guru Arjan - Majh.

Helpless and impotent is the wooden marionette,
He who pulls the strings knows its moves.
The actor assumes the guise
As the director of the play directs.

kath ki putli kaha karai bapri
khelavanharo janai
jaisa bhekh karavai bajigar
oh taisa hi saj anai

Guru Arjan - Gauri.

The Author of the drama of the universe gets the actors to play their different roles according to His own design and plan. The actors do as they are prompted and inspired to do.

At the same time, stress has been laid on the need for us to exert ourselves. We have to be up and doing, to be good, to read the Gurbani to resort to Simran to realize God, to earn our bread by the sweat of our brow and to share it with the needy, to serve our fellowmen. Life is another name for toil and sweat. In it there is no place for lotus-eaters.

0 thou Man, thou must seek thy happiness
In exertion, in earning thy living by
the sweat of thy brow.
Through unceasing remembrance of God
Thou wouldst meet Him and thy worries
would end.

udam karedia jio tu
kamavadia sukh bhunch
dhiaidia tu prabhumul
Nanak utri chint

Guru Arjan - Gujri Var.

Up, up, Sister mine, let us be up and doing,
To win our Spouse, the Lord God.

sun sakhie mil udam kareha
manai laihe hari kante

Guru Arjan - Gauri.

Those who live and move and have their being in God,
Reap the fruit of their labours and are one with Him.

uthat baithat sovat nam
kaho Nanak jan kai sad kam

Guru Arjan - Gauri.

Earn thy Thing with toil
And Share it with others
This is the true path to God.

ghal khait kichhi hathoh deh
Nanak raho pachhanah se

Guru Nanak.

With each breath, think of Him, think of Him,
This will wash away the filth of thy heart.

sas sas simroh Gobind
man antar ki utrai chint

Guru Arjan - Gauri.

Through meditation, through Simran,
Thou wilt be blissful,
And thy worries and cares and troubles will end.

simar simar simar sukh pavo
kal kales tan mahi mitavoh.

Guru Arjan - Gauri.

Both the viewpoints have been emphasized in the Guru Granth, and at the outset, the seeker will find it difficult to reconcile the two seemingly contradictory ideas. For instance, there is the thought embodied in the following verse:

> Thou wilt not find God through austerities
> Nor through worship,
> He will visit you unawares.
>
> *ghal na milio sev na milio*
> *milio ai achinta*

Guru Arjan - Dhanasri.

Now, mark another verse:

> Up, up, Sister mine, let us be up and doing
> To win our Spouse, our Lord God.
>
> *sun sakhiye mil udam kareha*
> *manae laihe hari kante*

Guru Arjan - Gauri.

If our labours do not carry us to God, then where is the point in asking us to exert ourselves to toil hard, make supplications, share our wealth with others and to serve and make sacrifices?

But we must remember that the two types of instructions are intended for two different types of people, who are at two different stages of spiritual growth; those who are in the preliminary stage and those who are at the peak.

Sit by a physician for a while, and you will find something amazing. For some patients he prescribes a constipative drug, for others a purgative. To some he suggests fomentation, to others an ice bag on the head. He is dealing with different maladies in different cases. As the disease, so the remedy.

Similarly, the mind suffers from diverse diseases, and hence the treatment cannot be alike.

If there seem to be contradictions in the teachings of great souls, we must not be too impatient, or over-hasty in criticising them. We must pause and ponder, and get at the core of things.

Those who are not conversant with all types of mental and spiritual conditions of Man would do well to first ponder those precepts of the Gurus that make a special appeal to them and watch and wait for a clear understanding of things, which are yet beyond their experience or comprehension. To be impatient to understand the latter would be tantamount to saying that the infant should be anxious to understand the M.A. course.

How can a beginner who has yet to master the preliminary steps be in a position to understand the crowning mysteries of the spirit? For instance, the crown and climax of spiritual realisation is

Nothing is born, naught doth die;
His the play and He the Actor.

nah kichh janmai nah kich marai
apan chalit ap hi karai

Guru Arjan - Gauri.

God's devotee is united with God
He and God are now One.

hari jan hari hari hoia
Nanak hari ike

Guru Ramdas - Asa.

How can the seeker grasp this subtle truth in the preliminary stage?

We receive our thought-waves through cosmic intelligence according to certain laws. Since we cannot see the other side of the picture we fancy that we are the authors of such thought-waves. These thought-waves govern our whole life; our actions are impelled by these thought-waves, but these thought-waves emanate from an unknown and an unseen source. Whatever we do is done in pursuance of and in obedience to these thought-waves, but since we know not, and understand not, the unknown, unseen Source, we subjectively feel that we are doing and shaping and moulding our course.

In water, bubbles are formed by the injection of air, though seemingly the bubbles and waves arise of themselves out of water. Similarly, we imagine that thought currents, which emanate from our brains, are of our own creation though in fact they come from an unknown, invisible source. What is the genesis, the psychology of Thought?

What mental phenomena arise and operate in the brain when we ponder an abstruse, subtle problem? As we ponder, we receive a flash of light, a glimmer of an idea front an unknown Source, and this flash is interpreted by the brain, and we joyously blurt out, "Oh! I have solved and resolved the tangle, I have unravelled the riddle."

In fact, thought currents come from an unknown Source into our brain and the brain only interprets them. The central point worth remembering is that the human brain interprets the thought waves emanating from Brahm or God, according to its own development. It cannot create them. Just as a typewriter - a mere machine cannot type anything of itself but whenever we so desire, we can remove the lid and type what we wish, and similarly, the human brain cannot work of itself. It is a machine, which receives, like a radio receiver, thought waves transmitted by Brahm, or the Infinite Soul. The brain is only a medium to receive and transmit ideas. If and when we understand the working and nature of the brain, we begin to understand the Guru's dictum:

> Living things, humans and all.
> Do what God impels and prompts them to do.
>
> *jo hari lorhe so kare soi jia karan*

Guru Arjan - Rag Majh.

And when we are God-intuned and realize the reality, the inner working of the brain, we understand the Guru's dictum. But it is by no means easy to develop this frame of mind. It takes years of exercise in concentration to be introspective and God-centred.

Therefore, all beginners, instead of 1eveting their attention on profound and intricate problems of the spirit, would do better to act on the fundamentals of gurmat. Instead of aspiring to be philosophers, they would do well to perform Simran, and patiently wait for the stage when they can grasp the subtlest, profoundest, and sublime truths of the Spirit effortlessly.

Chapter 18

God-Centered and Self-Centered People

There is knowledge in diverse forms in the world, but there is only one way to acquire it. We must understand the stock of knowledge that already exists and then, if possible, add to it. The whole stock of human knowledge has advanced in the manner people acquire knowledge in a particular sphere by assimilating what already exists on the subject. One who wishes to learn music must needs receive instruction from a musician, or seek the aid of appropriate books on the subject.

When we seek spiritual knowledge, we accept the guidance of a spiritual teacher. We weigh and ponder his words, and then act upon them.

In acquiring knowledge of any kind, we must, of course, have faith in the teacher. This is a fundamental requirement.

The spiritual seeker puts his faith in the teachings of his spiritual teaches, under whose guidance and inspiration, he rises to spiritual heights where all doubts and questionings are set at rest. Not that honest doubts do not, or should not, arise in a God-centred soul. That would be against human nature. But he must wait patiently for light, and, in the meantime, act in the light of guidance which the Gurus and great spiritual teachers of humanity have left us as a precious heritage. And, eventually, our doubts are resolved.

But if we are self-centred, we do not have the patience to wait. We want our doubts to be resolved at once, and if they are not, we do not wish to walk on the path chalked out by the great Teachers of Humanity.

To say the least, this is an unscientific attitude. Unless we actually learn music, how can we be convinced that there are but seven tunes in high and low key in music? We learn by actual practice. The seeker of Truth profits by the spiritual experience of Masters who have attained spiritual eminence and acts in accordance with their spiritual pronouncements. To go across the seas, we entrust ourselves to shipping experts and similarly, sensible spiritual seekers entrust themselves to the guidance of tried and tested spiritual teachers.

The God-centred remain unaffected
By the sins and evil ways of the world,
Nam sustains them and the Guru upholds them.

gurmukh alipt rahe sansare
gur kai takiai nam adhare

Guru Ramdas - Majh.

Chapter 19

Submission To God's Will

The meaning of submission to, or accepting, God's will is very much misunderstood among us. Whenever we are unable to avert or escape misfortunes, trials and tribulations, tragedies and catastrophes, we in our helplessness say; "We submit to God's Will, for it is so ordained." We thus foist and fasten and pin on God in our helplessness, all our failures, sufferings, maladies, strifes, want and worries, and sorrows, as if God were raining down sufferings on us and we are forced to bear them willy-nilly. This is not submitting to, or welcoming, God's Will. It is in fact ignorance of His nature.

If we interpret cosmic laws in this fashion, we do not understand God's ways at all, nor is it acceptance of God's Will. It is impotence in the face of compulsion, not joyful acceptance of God's Will. Impotent despair would imply that God makes us miserable through heaping misfortunes on us. But God is ever Good, ever gracious, ever beneficient, ever kind.

God blesses the virtueless with virtues,
God blesses the virtuous with more virtues.

Nanak nirgun gun kare
gunvantia gun de

Guru Nanak - Japu.

God unites those who are torn asunder,
He sustains all creatures,
He looks after all,
He does nothing that is useless or devoid of good.

tuti gadhan har Gopal
sarab jia ape pritipal
sagal ki chinta jis man mahi
tis te birtha koi nahi

Guru Arjan - Gauri Sukhmani.

He fulfil's our heart's desires,
He is our refuge.

mansa puran sarna jog

Guru Arjan - Gauri.

He is good,
What He does is supremely good.

ap bhala kartut ati niki

Guru Arjan - Gauri.

The Perfect One is never sour in speech,
Who can find imperfections in Him?

kaurha bol na janai puran Bhagwanai
augan ko na chitare

Guru Arjan - Suhi.

Will God inflict suffering on His own creation? Will He design to make them miserable? Will He afflict them with want and worry, pain and suffering? Suppose a millionaire has three sons. He is anxious to divide a certain sum equally to each of his three sons. Suppose again, he gives away a lakh of rupees to each with the words: "Earn the maximum amount of happiness with this amount. If you like, you may consult my trusted friends or myself as to how to derive the greatest happiness with this money."

Now, two sons believe that they should act independently of their father, because there can be no merit in allowing their father to lead them by the nose. The third son, on the other hand, holds that his own experience is nothing as compared to his father's and that it is worthwhile to draw on the wealth of the father's long and mature experience. The father, however, does not like to interfere in their affairs barring offering them wise counsel and his blessings.

Now, two of the sons use the money according to their free choice. One of them squanders it in speculation, gambling, and at the races. The second son luxuriates, taking to drinking, debauchery, and wrecks his health and becomes an invalid in charitable hospitals.

The third son, acting on his father's advice, sets up a small business and earns enough, so that he and his family can easily make ends meet, with enough leisure to read instructive and inspiring books, to profit by his father's useful company and to associate with his father' wise and virtuous friends, so that he moulds his life on lofty principles and, free from worries and vexations, devotes his attention to the maintenance of his own and his family's health and culture.

The God-centered remain unaffected by the sins and evil ways of the world, Nam sustains them and the Guru upholds them.

Now, the father had shared his wealth equally with his sons for their benefit. Two of the sons used the patrimony according to their own choice and free will, while the third followed the advice of his father. Two of them lost their all and were unhappy. The third prospered and was happy. Could the two unhappy sons hold their father responsible for their own unhappiness?

God has, out of His inexhaustible treasure through the countless ages, bestowed untold wealth on His children to make them happy. But we are self-centred. We do not act on the precepts of saintly souls, we misuse our talents and make ourselves unhappy. Our ignorance and our illusions are responsible for our sufferings.

> Those who heed not the words of their spiritual guides,
> Are heaped with reproaches,
> Supremely unhappy are they,
> Ever full of worry and vexation galore.
>
> *satgur te jo moh phereh mathe tin kale*
> *andin dukh kamavde tin johe jamja1e*
> *supnai sukh na dekhni baho chinta parjale*

Guru Amardas - Sri Rag.

Much spiritual advancement is essential to accept and welcome God's will cheerfully. He alone can accept God's will cheerfully who knows the working of God's will and has full faith in His goodness.

One who willingly submits to Divine Will must understand the following:

- 1.That he enjoys the pleasure of God.
- 2.That he enjoys His company.
- 3.That God is his well-wisher and sympathiser.
- 4.That his earnest and sincere prayers never go unanswered.
- 5.That God takes care of his betterment much better than he himself can do.
- 6.Whatever God wills is in his best interests.
- 7.God can never approve of anything inimical to the best interests of His devotee.

The spiritual seeker must understand that the stage for cheerful acceptance of God's Will cannot be easily reached. It takes time to develop. And when that stage is reached, a voice from within says so.

Many a Sikh, in difficulties from which he sees no way out, says in extreme despair and frustration: "It is God's will, and I accept it." This is not accepting God's will. This is impotent despair, and just the reverse of cheerful acceptance of God's will. When we cheerfully, unhesitatingly, voluntarily, with unshakeable faith in God, court the greatest suffering the direst ordeal, we can be said to be accepting God's will cheerfully.

In Sikh chronicles, there are countless instances of Sikh martyrs, who, with firm faith in God, courted martyrdom calmly, coolly, and cheerfully. This happens when we are inspired by God to demonstrate a great spiritual truth, and those alone are selected as instruments for the fulfillment of God's purpose that are spiritually fittest. Guru Arjan was chosen to sit serenely on red-hot iron-plates and in cauldrons of boiling, blistering, water when he was spiritually best qualified to undergo the fiery ordeal, and he merrily sang:

Sweet is Thy Will,
All I ask for is Nam.
Thy sweet remembrance.

tera kia mitha lagai
hari nam padarath Nanak mangai

Guru Arjan - Asa.

Mian Mir no doubt was a spiritually advanced soul, but had not yet climbed the peak where cheerful acceptance of God's will is a matter of course. No wonder that on beholding Guru Arjan's tortures, he doubted if God is an embodiment of love and developed hatred towards human creatures. Guru Arjan smiled and cheerfully accepted God's will, while Mian Mir could not understand its working. Guru Arjan, by his cheerful suffering, demonstrated to one and all that the allurements of the world and physical suffering could not affect him who was at one with God and that death meant nothing to those whose own will was attuned to God's will.

When Nam Dev was confronted with the challenge to revive a dead cow or face death, he preferred the lower course of reviving the dead cow by the grace of God to demonstrate that God provides shelter to a devotee in trial. Nam Dev took that decision because he was not yet ripe for the higher course, and, therefore, God chose him as an instrument for an easier demonstration of a spiritual truth the protection of His saints. At one time in his life, Guru Arjan himself was an instrument for the demonstration of that truth. He describes that spiritual experience thus:

Heaven has protected me from Sulhi Khan
Sulhi Khan could not harm me;
Suihi Khan died an ignoble death.
Heaven drove him into a burning furnace;
He was reduced to dust in a trice,
Sulhi thought evil, and evil killed him;
My Creator proved my shield.
His sons, friends, wealth, and all were left behind,
He left behind his kith and kin.
I am a sacrifice unto Him,
Who proved the truth of what I predicted.

sulhi se narain rakh
sulhi ka hath kahi na pahuche
sulhi hoi mua napak
kadh kuthar khasam sir katia
khin mahi hoi gaia hai khak
manda chitvat chitvat pachia
jini rachia tini dina dhak
putar mit dhan kichhu na rahios
chhod gaia sabh bhai sak

Guru Arjan - Bilawal.

Similarly, by the grace of God, Christ like Baba Atal resurrected the dead. But in that stage he was at that particular spiritual level when he was demonstrating that God protects and sustains His saints and blesses them with miraculous powers. But, in the fullness of time, he rose to those spiritual heights when he marched triumphantly through the valley of the shadow of death to life eternal and demonstrated thereby that those who are at one with God are beyond the reach of the sting of death. The man of God rises above death, is an image of God Himself, and if he so chooses, he can resuscitate the dead, or walk through the valley of death, calm, serene, and fearless.

If the spiritual seeker finds himself incapable of cheerfully accepting God's will, he need not be despondent or impatient. Only he can cheerfully accept God's will who has attained spiritual perfection. Just as the M.A. degree is granted to those who have qualified for that distinction, similarly the stage of cheerful acceptance of God's will is reserved for spiritual researchers whose spiritual growth has reached the stage of perfection.

According to Guru Nanak, cheerful acceptance of God's will is the crown and climax of spiritual perfection and we attain that spiritual stage only when the preliminary stages have been gone through and when we feel that the stage of perfection is the only stage worth attaining.

They are saints and scholars true,
Who by God's grace accept God's will.

se bhagat se tat giani
jin kao hukam mania

Guru Amardas - Gujri.

Literal meaning of Bhana is liking, or welcoming, a thing. The Guru Granth enjoins on us to cheerfully resign ourselves to God's will, which means that we should live our life in a manner of which God approves. In the earlier part of this book, it has been pointed out that God would ever have us live cheerfully and blissfully, Let us see what the Guru approves in a disciple:

The perfect guide sustains the disciple,
He is ever gracious to him,
He illumines his mind and heart,
Inspired by the Guru, he heartily utters God's name;
The true guide snaps asunder his disciple's bonds,
And the disciple shuns evil ways
The true guide paves the way for here and hereafter,
The Guru hugs such a disciple to his heart.

satgur sikh ki karat pritpal
sevak kao gur sada daiail
sikh ki gur durmat mal hirai
gur bachni hari nam uchrai
satgur sikh ke bandhan katai
gur ka sikh bikar te hatai
satgur sikh kao nam dhan de
gur ka sikh vadbhagi he
satgur sikh ka halat palat savarai
Nanak satgur sikh kao jianal samarai.

Guru Arjan - Gauri Sukhmani.

From the above it is established that while God ever wishes his creation to live in peace and bliss; the Guru assists human beings to achieve this objective by faithfully living up to his teachings.

God is invisible, and hence each and every one of us is not in a position to grasp God's nature or will, but the Satguru in visible form is there to guide and inspire and direct our steps on the spiritual path. The question arises as to what a Sikh must do and how he must live his life, to earn the Guru's pleasure. What does the Guru expect of a disciple? Guru Ramdas answers this question as follows in Guru Granth:

A true disciple must rise very early in the morn.
And meditate on God with all his heart;

He must be up and doing;
He must have an early bath,
He must live and move and have his being in God,
He would thus wash off the filth of his sins;
He must sing the Guru's words on daybreak,
Sitting or standing, he must live in God
He who remembers God with his every breath
Such a Sikh is beloved of the Guru,
On whom God is gracious, he meets the perfect guide,
And listens to his counsel wise;
I am a sacrifice unto him
Who meditates on God and inspires others to do the same.

Gur satgur ka jo sikh akhwai
so bhalke uth hari nam dhiavai
udam kare bhalke parbhati
isnan kare Amritsar navai
updes guru hari hari jap japai
sabh kilvikh pap dokh lahi javai
phir charhai divas gurbani gavai
bahdia uthdia hari nam dhiavai
jo sas giras dhiat mera hari hari
so gursikh gura man bhave
jis nu dial hovai mera suami
tis gursikh guru updes sunavai
jan Nanak dhurh mangai tis gursikh ki
jo ap japai avrah nam japavai

Guru Ramdas - Gauri-Var

According to above quotations only that devotee earns the Guru's pleasure who constantly remembers God's name and inspires others to do the same. Such a Sikh is intimately loved by the Guru and is said to live in his will.

The central, pivotal point according to Guru Granth is that we must remember God every moment of our life and inspire others to do the same. He who practises and understands the central spiritual secret there through overcomes by the grace of God, the trials and tribulations of life cheerfully. He is ever full of bliss and blesses others.

He who walks with God and accepts his will with joy,
Cometh not to harm or grief.

Gur kai bhane jo chalai
dukh na pavai koi

Guru Amardas - Sri Rag.

He who walks with God,
Is beyond all praise.

Satgur kai bhane jo chalai
tis wadiai wadi hoi

Guru Amardas - Saloka.

If we walk with God and execute his will,
We are blessed, thrice blessed.

anand khasam kai bhanai jio.

Chapter 20

Knowing and Achieving

If we find in our father's or grandfather's will, or some other document, that a great treasure lies buried in a particular corner of the house, we are naturally thrilled. But if we take no pains to unearth the treasure, nor provide ourselves with the tools to dig it up, or if we dig at all, do not dig to a sufficient depth, we will not find the treasure and unless the riches are actually secured no body can claim to be rich.

Seekers who have been told by Gurus, or spiritual teachers, that the material and spiritual treasures are buried within themselves are by no means entitled to assume that they have thus secured these and are all powerful like the Brahm, simply because they have learnt this fact from others. Mere hearsay knowledge is not enough. To deem ourselves rich without our actually finding the treasure would be silly. Mere study of books on God, or mere hearing of Him from good souls is not the same as finding or seeing God.

> Saith Kabir, what could the true teacher do
> When the disciple is full of error?
>
> *Kabir sacha satgur kia karai*
> *jao sikhan mahi chuk*

Kabir.

To realize God, we must seek within, and lose ourselves within Him; we must shape ourselves on His pattern and see the world, as if through His eyes, and finally attain perfection. Till we have reached that stage, it is mere self-deception to assume that we have actually attained that stage.

At times, the mind deludes and misleads us, and there are times when our mental illusion is so deep-seated that we are bogged in delusion for a long, long time. We fancy that we have attained freedom of the spirit, while we actually tighten our fetters. Our mind twists and distorts spiritual principles and we are easy victims of illusion:

> One God is all-pervading and there is naught without Him.
> God is all, God is all-in-all
> There is none, there is naught without Him.
>
> *sabh Gobind hai sabh Gobind hai*
> *Gobind bin nahi koi*

Namdev - Asa.

The mind does at times distort this great truth. The mind prompts, "If God is all-pervading, He is also in me and so I am God and if so, virtue and vice are naught for me. I might do anything, without being sinful."

We are thus induced to do low, mean things fearlessly. Or the train of thought might be like this, "If God is all-in-all, where is the point in adoring Him? Adoration of God is for him who does not realize the great truth about God. Since I know it, I have no use for it. Meditation is not required of me."

We are thus deluded, and I have met many sadhus and others who equate mere verbal knowing with actual realisation, and live under this delusion. The spiritual seeker must beware of these delusions of mind.

As I have perfect faith in the Guru Granth, I generally steer clear of illusions and delusions. Due to my daily recourse to the Guru Granth I strive to mould my thoughts in its light and am consequently, spared most of the snares and traps of the mind. The Guru Granth creates self-discipline and saves us from illusions.

> Conquer the mind and you conquer the world.
> *man jitai jag jit*

Guru Nanak - Japu.

This is a great truth and when we attain higher stages of spiritual progress, we generally escape illusions, because we view things in the light of the Gurbani.4 It is of prime importance to first grasp a spiritual truth, and when it has been fully grasped, we must act upon it day and night, and when we have practised it thoroughly, its beneficent effects become crystal-clear. This cannot happen before we have fully put the spiritual truth into effect. This requires great perseverance.

To know a truth is one thing but to embody that truth in our being, quite another. If we read religious books, listen to the words of spiritual Masters or read the Gurbani, we do form an idea of God, and we aspire to realize God, but this aspiration is not the same as realising God. I can say from personal experience that there is a world of difference between mere intellectual concepts of God and actual unity with God. I have heard many sadhus and others shout: "A Brahm Gyani is God Himself," and they actually pose as such, even though they lack the qualities of a Brahm Gyani.

Every spiritual truth has first to be mentally grasped and believed. Then arises a delusion that we have attained perfection. But we must escape this illusion. A spiritual seeker becomes an embodiment of a spiritual truth, if and when he assimilates it in his being, acts upon it and becomes an embodiment thereof, and not before doing so. In the first stage, the seeker of Truth, and Truth itself are two separate things, and in the final stage when Truth abides in every fibre of his being, in the marrow of his bones, in his flesh and blood, then Truth and the Truth-seeker are one. And then this Truth becomes inseparable from him, even when he is subjected to dreadful persecution and torture and is broken on the wheel or is seated on red-hot iron pans. Then alone does he prove:

A Brahm Gyani is God, the very God.
Brahm giani ap parmesar

Guru Arjan - Gauri.

Chapter 21

Mystic Immortality

This section was not in the original book but I felt it needed to be added because of some comments made by Sardar Raghbir Singh. The comments relate to his description of the final state of mystic bliss. He believes that in the epitomy of mystical achievement, the mystic has no need to live and Mahatmas only do so because of their wish to help others. This whole book is an interpretation of Sikh mysticism and as he has said in his book, he still has unanswered questions. Therefore I have added this section as a different view of the highest stage of the mystic because I think his description is misleading. It is taken from some writings of Daljeet Singh that describe another Sikh mystic and all references are from Shri Guru Granth Sahib.

The question of immortality has arisen in all religions. Some persons believe that the entire religious search of man is based on his desire for immortality. There is little doubt that in his temporal existence man feels very insecure. As against it, life's fundamental urge is to live and overcome the insecurity and threat to one's existence. Death is the greatest haunting fear of man. Life tries to meet this problem in two ways. It develops the two systems of self-maintenance and reproduction, which are aimed at the continuation of life. In one form or the other, man lives in his progeny. But, this mode of perpetuation by lite is inadequate. Fear and death still remain the basic problems of man. In many of their hymns, the Gurus refer to this twin problem of man and suggest the solution of God-consciousness. "He who is in fear of death should surrender to the saints." (p.266) "If man remembers God, pain and death do not come near him. If he remembers God, one is not assailed by fear." (p.262) "He who leans only on God, escapes the noose of death." (p.281) "The Guru's service gives peace and freedom from insecurity; the cycle of births and deaths is broken and the angel of death is helpless." (p.651)

The implication of all these verses is that man continues to be the victim of the fear of death and the consequent loss of his identity. The semi-deterministic animal procreation has proved an unsatisfactory device. By God-consciousness and by establishing a relation with God, both these problems of man are solved. He gains a new and higher self-conscious personality and true existence. The mystic has no sense of insecurity. He becomes fearless and remains in poise, harmony and bliss. He does not suffer from any pain, conflicts and frustration. Instead of a small egoistic individuality, he gains a higher supra-conscious personality in harmony with entire life. Death has no dread for him.

This does not mean that the God-conscious person suffers no physical death. But, he lives a conscious life hereafter. This is what Guru Nanak plainly mentions in the hymn of *Karamkhand*. He says that these *Bhagats* (God-centred persons) are filled with God. They are ever in bliss. They do not die. They understand everything and are misled by none. In short, the Gurus conceive of a conscious individual personality of the God-centred person even after his physical death. "By Guru's Grace they remain in union with God. They do not transmigrate. *Gurumukh* comes and goes (i.e., borns and dies) without any restrictions." (p.932) "The God-conscious never dies." (p.222)

The Sikh mystic, Baba Wasakha Singh, gave the following clarification of the issue. "The mystic is a supra-conscious entity even after life. He enters the world consciously, with a purpose and according to the Will of God." In order to illustrate his peint, he gave two similes. "The mystic comes into the world just like the man who enters the well in order to save a drowning person. Viewed externally, both are in the well. One of them is in difficulty, the other has gone on his own with the object of saving the drowning person." That is the comparative position of man and the mystic. One is the helpless victim of circumstances. He feels insecure and is in difficulty. He is anxious about his fate and future. The mystic is faced with no such problem. He comes to the world to carry out His Will. Another simile he gave was that of the prisoners and the jailor. "The liberty of the prisoners stands curtailed. They are bound by their circumstances. They cannot overcome them. The jailor is the master of the situation. He is free to enter the jail and return at his own will. The jailor enters the specific prison with objectives in view and returns after fulfilling them." According to these two similes, the mystic has a supraconscious status after his physical death. The mystic returns and may return again and again, but he does so with a purpose. He is not the

type who merges or who, when once released from the world, never returns.

In Sikhism, God-centredness or the mystic achievement implies not only a continuous creative work in life, but also a supraconscious immortal personality of the kind envisaged above.

This idea of a continuously creative working life as opposed to a withdrawal from life is further elucidated by the following words of Baba ji, "It is a great achievement to have the mystic experience of God. I cannot describe the depth of bliss one finds in that state. But Gurus' mysticism goes ahead and higher than that. While being in tune with God, one has to do good in the world and undertake the service of man. It is a higher stage than the one of mystic bliss. This is the stage of Gurus' Sikhism. You know how difficult it is for an ordinary person to give up the wordly pleasures and possessions, instead of following the path of God. It is even more difficult for the mystic to come out of the state of his intense and tranquil bliss in order to serve man. But that is the Will of God. It is the highest mystic stage to serve the poor and the downtrodden and yet remain in union with Him ... The mystic bliss is so intense that a moment's disconnection with it would be like death to me, but the higher stage than that is not to remain enthralled in it, but, side by side, to work consistently for the well-being of the suffering humanity".

And finally, some more background on Baba Wasakha Singh just because it is very enlightening.

Most of Babaji's associates were members of the Communist or the Socialist parties, all fighting for socio-political causes and freedom of the country. Here is one of the appeals he issued to his countrymen. 'Each one of you should help and join the freedom fighters in their war for independence. Slavery is a great curse. If you cannot help the struggle for freedom, at least desist from obstructing and opposing the efforts of the patriots. You have been praying for the victory of the British so as to save them from defeat at the hands of Germans. Can you not at least pray for those engaged in the fight for freedom of your own country Is not death better than the present slavery?' A few more words about his political views. He said that it was the Will of God that all men should live as equals and disparity among them should go. All forces, even the biggest Empires and Powers, if they came in the way of this progressive movement initiated by God, would be crushed. He used to observe jokingly, "Sikhs feel I am not a good Sikh because most

of my associates and co-workers are communists who have no faith in God. On the other hand, communists say that I can never be a good communist because my first loyalty is to God."

Hans Sarvar gives an account of the lives and views of a noted chain of Sikh mystics who lived between 1830 and 1950. In that book Babaji finds a prominent mention as one of the great personalities. The editor, himself a mystic, describes him as an outstanding living mystic. Most of his early morning was spent in his Devotional remembrance of God and in meditation. Those in trouble made all kinds of requests to him for alleviating their sufferings. Invariably he prayed for them. Many cases have been verified in which he had done the healing. He never tried to take credit for the healing that took place. When anyone made a request, he would say, "Let us pray together to God to help us." And he would pray to God thereafter.

True, Babaji's views about mysticism were deeply dyed by the Guru Granth and the lives of the Sikh Gurus. All the same, his statements about mysticism are very clear on the issues we have discussed earlier. We record the translation of extracts from a poem written by Babaji while he was in the Andaman jail:

"Some persons say that there is no God. They proclaim and spread this falsehood. I hereby state the truth, true God has shown His presence to the *Bhagats* (mystics).' 'Many Mahatmas have stressed that one should give up the house-holders life and have resort to the seclusion of the forest. There, they suggest, one should take to ascetic practices, give up food and clothing, and starve the beautiful human body to a skeleton. For the purpose, they recommend all kinds of self-inflicted tortures, including hanging oneself upside down, standing erect all the time and smearing the head and the body with ashes. Some get themselves beheaded at Kashi, others have their limbs mutilated. Do not imagine that it is easy to have ones head removed in the name of God. But, hail, Guru Nanak and the ten Gurus, who have shown a lovely, glorious and straight path, without fruitless self-tormenting of the body. The practice of self-mortification cannot destroy the snake of egoism *(Haumain)*. Live as a householder in the world, and follow the advice of the Gurus for earning your living by honest means and for sharing your income with others. Live well and keep your body, house and clothes neat and clean, remembering God all the time. Give good education both to your boys arid girls. Be on your guard against the wiles of the egoself and follow the way of *Nam*. 'The ego misleads you. Beware of it and keep yourself on to the

path of God, always remembering Him. Control your ego, otherwise it is likely to lead you into difficulties and land you in deep waters Be strong and bold enough to keep it under check, because few can escape its machinations. Practice your meditation and concentration in order to keep the mind in tune with the Word of God, thereby hearing the unstruck music, If you keep your mind attuned to God *(Waheguru)*, you will remain tranquil and in peace, and have no pain and suffering. Always raise your voice against those who are tyrannical to man. Bring those who shun the poor and the weak on to the right path. There is but one God and we are all his children. Let us love one and all. Fill your heart with the love of God, second serve your country and, third, use your earnings .for the service of man. Practice these three virtues and educate your children to do the same. God approves and acclaims those who imbibe these values."

The editor of Hans Servar, while recording the above poem. writes that Babaji's views are well known, namely, that howsoever religious devotion and meditations *(Bhakti)* one may practise and, whatever might be one's conduct and merits, if tine has not at heart the love of man or compassion for him, one is hardly a worthwhile Sikh (mystic). Further, that if anyone is unjust or oppressive, all his meditations or *Samadhis* and *Bhajan* are of no avail. He writes that Babaji's whole life had been spent in fighting those who were tyrannical and unjust to man.